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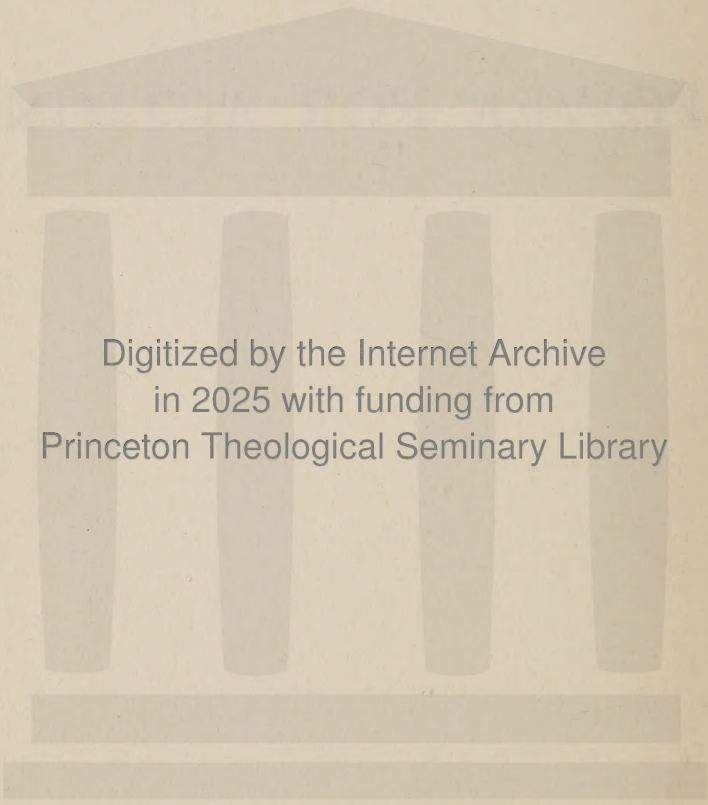
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AN INTRODUCTION TO
CHRISTIAN ETHICS

By
William A. Spurrier

NEW YORK
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1948

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A

FOREWORD

THE purpose of this book has been prompted by several factors. While teaching Christian ethics at Amherst College and Wesleyan University, the writer was struck by the fact that there were almost no books dealing with this subject in terms that not only college people but also lay people, both old and young, could understand. With one or two exceptions, most books on Christian ethics were either too superficial and "Sunday Schoolish," or else too advanced and technical. What seems to be needed, therefore, is a book on Christian ethics designed to meet and to appeal to the general public.

A second factor is the times we live in. Our age seems to be one in which all ethical values are suspect, or radically challenged, or fast changing. Thus young people and old alike are in the position of needing desperately some direction, some values, some meaning to guide them in this vastly confused and rapidly changing world. Yet they find that the predominant culture and philosophies flatly deny the validity of such directions and values by reducing them to subjective and unreliable opinions with no objective reality. Ideals are now regarded by some merely as rationalizations of self-interest and desire, ethical values as either superstitious dogma, or subjective opinions, mere guesswork. But in spite of this trend, large numbers of people find their lives strangely barren and empty. To be sure, our recent debunking age destroyed much that needed discarding, but this destruction went too far. Consequently, many people today find themselves with almost no compelling purpose, no understandable meaning, no direction to their lives. Quite rightly, they refuse to grasp at just anything that is offered. People want and want desperately

a religion that offers them purpose and meaning and power, but they do not want it at the cost of intelligence and integrity. And so they search and ofttimes seem to search in vain.

In terms of religious literature, this field is not too attractive to the seeker. In this author's judgment there is a regrettable chasm between superficial "popular" books and the advanced highly technical theological books. There seems to be a paucity of books in the "middle ground"; books which are consistent with scholarship, yet readable and understandable to the seeking layman. This book tries to meet that need. It is an attempt to state once more the principles of Christianity and how they can be translated into responsible ethical action. It is an endeavor to describe as clearly as possible what Christian ethics is and its urgent relevance to modern life.

The writer hastens to acknowledge that this is not a great book, nor a milestone in religious exposition that will be read for the next hundred years. In addition to the obvious limitations of the writer, the book is consciously limited. These boundaries have been set to fulfill the following purposes: first, as is noted above, this book is designed to appeal to college-age youth. Therefore, brevity, lucidity, and simple non-technical language have been considered. Second, most young people are neither interested nor prepared for highly technical and scholarly debates on precise points. For this reason, the book contains many brief and sweeping descriptions that may shock the theological or philosophical scholar. For example, the writer's analysis of Judaism is very short and broad and leaves out many important facts. Also the criticisms of naturalism and experimentalism do not include a fair statement of their positive contributions. To have included these and other elaborations would have side-tracked thought into the vast fields of Biblical theology, comparative religions, and the history of philosophy. The scope of this book just cannot allow that. Yet the writer believes that he has not included anything that is unfounded or contrary to scholarly accuracy. Since

this book is an introduction to Christian ethics and presupposes virtually no prior theological and philosophical knowledge on the part of the reader, it cannot indulge in detail in other fields. It is presumed that this perhaps will offer the reader stimulation and challenge to investigate further in both Christian and secular thought.

Third, systematic theological order has been avoided. The writer has found in his experiences in teaching both in colleges and in the Army, that young people have a definite order of thought, questions and attitudes which is not the same as the systematic order found in most formal theology books. Therefore, this book has followed the youthful pattern rather than the formal one. This in turn may shock the formal theologian. For example, theological order would demand that the religious and doctrinal bases of ethics be stated before the principles be applied. This would mean a long detailed account of New Testament exegesis and theology, discussion of the doctrines of time and eternity, the Kingdom of God, etc. This writer believes that the average college student is not ready for such discussion. Therefore, in this book, the religious doctrines and bases have been brought up piecemeal and, the writer believes, as they arise in young people's minds.

Fourth, footnotes, detailed sources, counter-quotes, etc., have been ruthlessly avoided. These items irritate the average reader and disrupt his concentration and thought. Since the writer makes no pretense of originality, the scholar will recognize how much he is indebted to such authors as Reinhold Niebuhr, Kierkegaard, St. Augustine, Temple, Fromm, Kunkel, and many other distinguished thinkers in several fields.

Fifth, because this book is only an "Introduction," the subject that is discussed is not treated exhaustively. Politics, economics, international relations, etc., are surveyed but by no means are all the attendant problems covered. The endeavor has been to give *sample* illustrations of how one can apply Christian ethics

in these fields. It would be fatuous, for example, for a reader to look at the Table of Contents, run down the list, pick out international relations and say, "Now, let's see how this Christian thinks he can solve this international mess we are in," or "What's his answer to the Russian situation, or Yugoslavia, or Germany?" To attempt this is to miss the point of the book. Perhaps the most accurate title would be: "A *Sample* Introduction to Christian Ethics and a Sample Application to Sample Modern Problems."

Finally, this book is not written from an "objective" point of view. It is frankly and intentionally "pro Christianity." No attempt is made critically to examine every assertion made. The presupposition behind all of the chapters is the Christian faith. Therefore, the book is purposely designed to state what, in the author's firm conviction, is the Christian viewpoint. That various interpretations are not universally agreed upon by all Christians everywhere is a foregone conclusion. Yet the author feels that this presentation is in accord with the historic Christian tradition in its essence if not in all its detail. Because this is a "pro-Christian" treatment, it does not mean that the reader is expected to "agree or else"! Rather, the hope is that this presentation will inform the reader what the Christian viewpoint is, thereby enabling him critically to examine, evaluate, and decide for himself.

Thus the aim of this book has been to present a clear, understandable, and incisive statement of Christian ethics and its relevance to modern life that will appeal and attract young people. It is impossible for the writer to tell whether this book fulfills its purpose or whether the method and approach nullify or enhance whatever values may be inherent in the subject matter. This is an experiment, then, and it will be worthwhile only if it helps young people to think reflectively, brings them to some understanding of the relevancy of Christian ethics, and finally, enables them to act responsibly and resolutely in a world which desperately needs the action of men and women of positive convictions.

Acknowledgments: It is difficult for the writer to single out only one or two people to whom he is especially indebted. This is because he has been privileged to have been aided by so many people. This particular book is due to the many, many young people in and out of college with whom I have had the privilege of wrestling with the problems of Christian ethics. Whatever contribution this book makes is due to these people and to my seminary professors, to the rich heritage of the Church, and to the frequent sharing with fellow clergy of all denominations.

For the exacting and boring work of typing this manuscript I am indebted to my secretary, Miss Kathleen Gratrix, and, of course, for the daily, penetrating and yet inspiring criticism from my wife, I owe more than I can say. Last but not least, the frequent interruptions by my son with his searching "Why, Daddy?" enabled me to avoid at least some "sixty-four dollar" words!

WILLIAM A. SPURRIER

MARCH, 1948
WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY
MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT

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POWER FOR ACTION

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN ETHICS?

IN SPITE of the fact that most of us attended Sunday School some time in our life, in spite of the fact that we live in a so-called "Christian Country," very few of us understand just what Christian ethics is. If someone asks us "What is Christian ethics?" we would probably answer and say that it is the Ten Commandments or the Golden Rule. Or if we do not give that answer, we say that Christian ethics is a list of vices and virtues such as: Virtue is meekness, piety, honesty, going to church regularly, helping your neighbor, etc.; vice is smoking, drinking, sex, display of emotion, hatred, envy, etc. With such an understanding of Christian ethics as this, it is little wonder that we regard such ethics as either hopelessly out of date in our modern world, or else as "nice ideals, but impossible to fulfill." Moreover, the fact that we can find the Golden Rule implied in the writings of Confucius, the Ten Commandments in a religion eight hundred years before Christ, and similar "ideals" in the writings of the Greek and Indian philosophers long before Christ, leads us to conclude that Christianity offers nothing new or special and that it is just one set of rules among many others. So why all this fuss about Christian ethics as something straight from God, as if it were something unique and unequaled anywhere else in the history of man?

The truth of the matter is that Christian ethics is not the Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, or another set of "do's and don't's." It is something totally different and unique, not found anywhere else in history. Let us see, therefore, in the following chapters, how it is possible to make such statements about the ethics.

PART I

★

The New Testament Basis of Christian Ethics

1

BASIC NEW TESTAMENT PRINCIPLES

IF WE want to find the source of anything to do with Christianity then the obvious place to look is the New Testament. And yet, we cannot fully understand everything in the New Testament unless we know something about the various situations—religious, social, political and economic, into which Christ was born. This requires some understanding of the Old Testament. For our purposes, then, it is necessary to describe the ethical beliefs and practices of the Jews in Palestine at the time of Christ.

The dominant religious and ethical customs of the Hebrew religion may be summarized in this fashion: The ethics of the Jews was centered around the law. Originally, the law consisted of the Ten Commandments, which, as was believed, were given to Moses directly by God on Mt. Sinai. As time went on, other laws and interpretations of laws were added to the original ten. Thus, by the time of Jesus, the law consisted of many hundreds of detailed rules governing all phases of life. If there was any doubt as to how a certain law should be interpreted, the priests of the temple and the Scribes and Pharisees (officials of the church) would study the vast traditions and render a decision. Their decision was final and authoritative. They were the supreme Court, as it were, for the laws of the Hebrew religion.

It is important to note here what this system of law implies with regard to ethics. It implies that goodness and righteousness can be clearly defined and performed. Similarly, that evil and

sin can also be made clear. Thus, a man who does everything the law requires is called "good"; he who breaks a law is called "bad" or "a sinner." Life, then, was divided up into a vast list of vices and virtues. Thereby, one could clearly see whether he and his neighbor were good men or not. In our own modern society, we have pretty much the same system. We say, for example, that a man who gives money to charity is a good man; that one who does not is selfish or bad. We say that so long as a man does not beat up another man, rob banks, cheat or steal, so long as a man acts rationally and without undue emotion, he is a good man. But if a man acts passionately, if he robs, steals, murders, then, we say, that man is bad. In short, our society has its rules of right and wrong. It has its check-lists, its fads, its "It's the thing to do," etc.

Another implication behind this ethical system is the view that the basic trouble with man is his ignorance, especially his ignorance of right and wrong. This view assumes that man is essentially good, but that he just doesn't know what is right. Therefore, the law system clearly told men what was right and wrong. From this it follows that since man is good and when he knows what the good is, he will go out and do good. Thus, the Hebrews enabled man to become righteous. Disobedience made him unrighteous. Again, much of our modern culture holds the same view. We believe that ignorance is the biggest problem of mankind. We believe that man is essentially a good and rational animal, but that he is ignorant of what is good and creative. Therefore, we say, we will educate man and when he is educated he will see the right and do it. We believe that the reason a man misuses his economic or financial power is simply that he does not know that such misuse really harms him in the long run, or that the violent demands of a labor union are simply "unenlightened," that is, they will prevent the very thing they want because they are going about it in the wrong (ignorant) way. Thus, like the Hebrew system, much of our society believes that

either man is ignorant of what he should do, or else that he has the wrong set of do's and don't's. Thus the communist believes the capitalist has the wrong set of "ideals," and the capitalist believes the communist not only has the wrong ideals, but is also ignorant!

A third implication of the Hebrew system is that this whole ethical system is not man-made, but is made by God and is established by a certain method called a covenant. The Hebrews believed that the law was given by God and that God made a kind of bargain or promise with them, namely, that if the Jews obeyed the law, they would thereby become righteous and God would save them. Save them meant rescuing them from the oppression and tyranny of other nations. Thus, if the Jews obeyed the laws of God they would therefore be righteous and therefore be granted national freedom and prosperity. This third implication is definitely not similar to our modern beliefs. Present-day opinions regard ethical deals as distinctly man-made, however noble and good. Moreover, we say that ideals and morals differ in each society and period of history. And since they are all man-made one cannot claim that his ideals are absolutely true. We say they may be best for him or his society, but not necessarily best or true for other people. And of course, we always think our own ideals are the best for us! But the important point to note here is the Hebrew idea that man can attain righteousness and favor in the eyes of God by obedience to the law. As we shall see later, this idea was severely challenged by Jesus.

It was into this system that Jesus was born. And it was this system which caused Him so much trouble and finally resulted in His death. As one reads the first three Gospels, one cannot fail to notice the sharp and constant conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees. Also, when one reads the Sermon on the Mount and the parables, one cannot fail to notice the acute difference between what Jesus taught and what the Hebrews taught. Let us look at this conflict.

2

CONFLICT WITH THE PHARISEES

AT THIS point, it is absolutely essential to get rid of a false picture held by many. Too often we tend to think that the Pharisees were very evil men, that they were devilishly clever and cunning, always plotting to kill Jesus, always trying to make money and graft out of poor people, that they were just a bunch of "religious racketeers." Actually, the Pharisees were "good men." They were among the "best" people of their day. Many of them were learned scholars, wise in law, economics, history. Many of them were very earnest and sincere men, deeply devoted to their religion. Their staunch opposition against Jesus proved that they were men of solid conviction. They sincerely believed that it was their duty to oppose Jesus, that it was right to resist what they regarded as false and dangerous doctrine put forth by this "revolutionary," this "religious fanatic," this "upstart." They really believed that the death of Jesus was a necessary and right thing. This tragedy might remind us of the harm that "good people" often do.

Having said this, it is easy to see that the conflict was not between Jesus and evil men, but between two very different points of view. As we read anywhere in the first three Gospels, we can find Jesus challenging the basic ideas of the Hebrew ethical system. In the first place, Jesus attacked the ideal that a man's goodness or righteousness is determined by what he does. While it is true that a really good man should and will do good deeds

and that "by your fruits ye shall be known," it is not necessarily true that he who does a so-called good deed is actually a good man. With his characteristic profound insight into human nature, Jesus tried to show the Pharisees that they had quite forgotten all about the motive, heart and character of men. He tried to tell them that mere "good deeds," obedience to law, was not enough. He did not say that good deeds and obedience were bad or wrong; He said that they were not enough and were not an accurate index as to whether a man was righteous or not. Thus, Jesus accused the Pharisees of being concerned only with the external actions of man. "You cleanse the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of extortion and rapacity" (Mat. 23:25). Jesus then goes on to show that what is of primary importance is a man's motive, his character. "Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder," etc. (Mat. 15:19). This is the key point in the ethics of Jesus. Attention is focused upon the inner condition of a man's character. For example, let us say that two men give money to a worthy charity. From the Hebrew point of view, both men would be called righteous. From the Christian point of view, it would be different. In order to judge, we should first have to find out the motives of each man. Let us say that Smith gave his money to charity because he wanted his neighbors to regard him as a charitable man or because he thought it would be good business, good advertising of his generosity. Jones, on the other hand, gives money because he really feels his responsibility to help those less fortunate than he, and because he believes that he should share God's resources. The Christian view would then say that although Smith's deed was good in the sense that it helped some people, actually Smith is righteous and quite selfish. Whereas Jones's deed is not only good, but Jones himself was righteous and good. So it depends upon the inward character and motive as to whether a man is good or not. This is the first and chief point which Jesus taught.

3

THE RADICAL DEMANDS OF JESUS

JESUS' emphasis upon the internal condition of a man's character is a radical point of view and if we stop for a moment and apply it to some problems in our modern life, we can see the difference it makes. For example, when some one does something that we think is wrong—such as stealing, cheating, murdering, or when one displays conceit, carelessness, or immorality, what will be our attitude? Perhaps the natural thing is merely to say the man is wrong, he is evil and ought to be punished. At the same time, we probably say to ourselves that we are glad we are not bad and in trouble as that person is—like the Pharisee who thanked God that he was not bad as other men were, while beside him the Publican—a sinner—cried, "God, be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). And Jesus quickly pointed out that the Publican was the better man—because he knew his own inner heart and that it was not good, while the Pharisee knew not his inner heart and thought he was good because he had not done any obvious wrong. So, too, with us, we often condemn people because they have done some obvious wrong. Jesus would change us. He would first tell us not to be so hasty in judging people lest we be judged. Secondly, He would want us to ask some questions. Why did that man do it? Why did he steal—is he in desperate need? Why did that person commit a tragic sex crime? Does he have some deep inner insecurity or neurosis which tempted him to believe that such a deed would be an escape or a solution to his problem? What other forces and

factors play a part in this behavior? When we approach the problems this way we are doing some very significant and unique things. We are regarding the person as a person, a real human being; we are trying to understand and appreciate him. This in its realest sense is truly loving our neighbor, loving our (social) enemy. We are not condemning him, we are trying to help him by finding out why he did it, by discerning what factors in the situation he was not responsible for, those factors for which he was responsible. Finally and equally important, when we learn all about those factors, we find that such a person is very much like us, that we have the same tendencies and insecurities in us, the same selfish desires and illusions of righteousness. The difference between us is one only of degree, or perhaps we may have chosen a more socially acceptable form of escape or solution to our problem. When we look at people and ourselves in that light, it means that we shall be more ready to help others and to reform ourselves at the same time. And there is a world of difference between that and merely putting someone in jail to rot and stagnate while we go about our own sweet way assuming that we are the good people. This, then, is the basic thing to remember about Christian ethics: What a man is, what kind of character and heart he has, determines what he does. If the tree is corrupt, the fruit will be corrupt: but if the tree be good the fruit will be good (Mat. 12:33). Thus, this doctrine of Jesus attacked the Hebrew and modern idea that good and evil can be clearly defined and that a man's righteousness or sin could be discovered merely by what he did.

The second challenge Jesus put forth was his doctrine that man's chief trouble was not his ignorance but his sin. In another chapter we will discuss this business of sin more in detail. For our purposes at this point, suffice it to say that sin is that attitude and state of character which believes that man is self-sufficient, that he is the "master of his fate and the captain of his soul," or to use a crude but common expression, "Me first—what's in

it for me?" Jesus saw that the basic trouble with men is not their ignorance but the clash of wills and desires. Invariably, all of us want things that are also desired by other people—hence a conflict arises. And we can seldom settle those conflicts objectively because we always think that our side of the argument is the right one. Of course, our opponent thinks the same about his side. This is true of nations as well as individuals. Also, in our own estimate of our own character, we always imagine that we are more virtuous and rational than we really are. A proof of this is the way we resent criticism. We resent it because it might be and probably is right. If we admitted it, we should be forced to lower our opinion of ourselves and perhaps change some of our habits. This hurts our pride; it offends us, we do not like it, "there's nothing in it for me."

Another example of what is meant by sin is that often we want certain advantages for ourselves—we want more money, or security, or power, or social prestige. These things are not bad in themselves. But too often we believe that if only we gain them all our problems will be solved. We believe that if we have them we shall be happy and righteous and creative. Thus when some political or economic measure comes up and it would seem to favor our private desires, we are heartily in favor of such a measure. At the same time, there are others who believe that such a measure is not "good" either for their private desires or for the country's best welfare. So there is a conflict. If we argue with our opponents merely on the ground that the measure helps our private wishes, we know we have no argument. We shall be accused of being "selfish" and narrow and greedy. But we know this in advance, so we rationalize our argument and say that the measure is really good for the whole country and any fool ought to be able to see that! Thus, we deceive ourselves. We cannot and do not want to be objective. We want something and want it desperately. Therefore, we will not give in easily, we shall not be inclined to "listen to reason." This attitude is what we call

sin. We must realize that the word, sin, is a very broad term and includes both definite acts of transgression and the omission of certain acts as well as that phase which this paragraph emphasizes. When an individual equates himself with God, he sins. This broader sense of sin must be emphasized for out of it transgressions, large and small, are apt to come.

So Jesus understood how powerful a thing is this sin. He knew that many times we know what is right and how few times we do what is right. He knew that everybody is looking out for himself above all. Therefore, Jesus demanded that a radical change must occur in the heart and character of man if things were to improve. "Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3), He said. Here he meant that we must effect a radical reform in our character. We must be humble. And humility does not mean that one must cringe and grovel in the dust and be a "mouse." It means that one is aware of his many short-comings, of his sin, of his inability to solve life's problems by his own resources, of his dependency upon others and especially upon God. "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mat. 10:39). That is, one must lose his proud, insecure, selfish self in order that his real self may rise up. This process—called conversion—we shall discuss later. The point is that this change demanded by Jesus is not just a small tinkering with some little part of one's character. It is not just learning a few more facts, or giving up a few bad habits—it is a deep inner transformation of one's entire character and attitudes. And it is not a sudden or complete process. It takes time and much mental and emotional wrestling. At any rate, Jesus' insistence on the necessity of a radical inner change of character attacked the heart of the Hebrew system of ethics—as it attacks almost every other ethical system then and now. For what Jesus implied here is that regardless of what ideals or laws you set up, man will not be able to fulfill them and indeed he will corrupt them. This is particularly true, as we

shall see later, in the fields of economics and politics. Regardless of how perfect an economic or political system is devised, it will not be realized precisely because man does not have the power nor the goodness to fulfill such ideal plans, and indeed, he will soon try to manipulate and use various policies to the furtherance of his own desires.

Thus, the crucial point, according to Jesus, is not our ignorance or our lack of ideals, but our selfish, sinful characters. We do not do good because we do not have the power to do it. Therefore, the problem of ethics is not so much what ideals and rules we establish, but how to find the power to do and to be good.

This should be made clear if we stop a moment and look at history. In all societies and civilizations before and after Christ, one can find plenty of noble and practical ideals, rules for behavior and social relationship. And there is a great deal of similarity amongst them. For example, "Thou shalt not murder" is an almost universal rule and ideal—at least when applied to one's own society or tribe. "Thou shalt not steal" is another universal ideal. We have libraries full of moral codes and ideals —it is the one thing we do not lack. Yet we have not progressed very far in our ethical behavior. The reason, as Jesus insists, is our sinful characters. Hence his demand for a change in our character.

This doctrine quite naturally antagonized the Hebrews, because, if it were true, then their whole system would have to be changed. Emphasis would have to be put on conversion rather than mere obedience. All the fine distinctions of the law would then be relatively unimportant. The whole religion would have to be changed, and none of us makes such a change easily. Hence the great opposition to Jesus.

Lastly, Jesus challenged the third implication of the Hebrew ethics. He challenged the covenant idea. This was perhaps the

most serious challenge, because this idea was the most cherished one. Jesus did not deny that there was always a kind of covenant between God and man to the effect that if certain conditions were fulfilled certain results would occur. What Jesus specifically attacked was the idea that man could become righteous in the sight of God merely by obeying the law and doing the good works set forth by the law. In a word, Jesus said that a man cannot be saved by good deeds. The reason for this should be fairly clear by now. In the first place, we have just seen that man does not have the power to live up to high ideals—his self-interest gets in the way. In the second place, even if man does attain certain ideals that is no indication that he is righteous and spiritually mature. Thus we may do and sometimes do do many good deeds but do so from essentially selfish motives. Therefore, one cannot say for sure whether the mere performance of ideals results in righteousness or not. In the third place, even if we do achieve good deeds and reach our ideals, there is little doubt but that we would take pride in that fact and believe ourselves to be more righteous than we really are. Indeed, most of us today believe that because we do not commit obvious wrongs we are righteous and respectable citizens. It is for this reason that Jesus replied to the man who called Him "Good master" with these words, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone" (Mark 10:18). Thus, Jesus flatly asserted that our spiritual and ethical problem cannot be solved by obedience and good works.

So far we have looked at the New Testament ethics only as it appeared in sharp contrast to the prevailing Hebrew ethics at the time of Jesus. However, it should be made clear here that the picture we have drawn of the Hebrew religion (Judaism) is not a true description of the real and profound beliefs of that religion as it existed and developed from Mosaic times to the present. Our brief analyses concern only its main features as it

appeared at the time of Christ. And it must be said that, at this period, Judaism was at a very low ebb and by no means representative of its higher levels both before and since.

Moreover, it is essential to note that Jesus did not repudiate and discard the law. He attacked a particular series of interpretations at that particular time in history. Jesus well knew the value and necessity of the law. He knew that so long as there are sinful men we must have laws which tell us some right and wrong, which provide standards of order and value in society, and which offer protection to people. Jesus was against the false interpretations and applications of the law and the attitudes which were behind these measures. He was not against the essential necessity and value of the law. To quote His own words, "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Mat. 5:17). Here he shows that he believed the law necessary, but not enough. The law tells us what is right, but we need more than that; we need the power to achieve, to fulfill the law. Let us turn more positively to a direct study of the ethics of Jesus. It has been said that the Sermon on the Mount is the core of Jesus' ethics, and this is true so long as we do not forget the rest of His teachings in the parables and discussions elsewhere in His life.

Perhaps the first thing to notice in the Sermon on the Mount is that there is not a single specific law or rule for behavior—except His statement about divorce (and it is questioned by many scholars whether Jesus even said this). The entire Sermon is a description of broad general attitudes and principles. He describes the attitudes and principles of humility, faith, trust, as over against pride, doubt and anxiety. And in terms of ethics, only one basic principle is stated and that principle is love. The rest of the Sermon and the rest of His ethical teachings are elaborations, examples, explanations of that one cardinal principle and attitude. This is a surprising contrast to both the He-

brew and other ethical systems—all of which have elaborate definitions of right and wrong and which go to great lengths to make sure one can easily tell right from wrong. But Jesus comes forth and simply preaches love. This was so amazing that someone asked Him what He was going to do about the law. To which Jesus replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." "You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets" (Mat. 22:37, 39, 40). Love of God and love of man! This is the ethic of Jesus and all other ethical systems can be summed up or reduced to that, implies Jesus. Christian ethics is as simple as that—and yet not so simple.

It is necessary that we understand what Jesus meant by love and that is why we must read all the New Testament to see how he defines and elaborates what He means by love. This is particularly important nowadays because the way the word love is used in modern meanings is usually a far cry from what Jesus meant by love. Christian love should never be identified with Hollywood love—which is sentimental and pseudoromantic. Christian love is not that tingle that goes up and down your spine when you see a pretty girl, nor is it that "romantic" feeling you have on house-party weekend when you just seem to "love" everybody and everything! Christian love is not that emotion which oozes pity on some unfortunate person, nor is it that spineless sentimentality which refuses to take swift and decisive action for fear that someone might get hurt or be offended and thereby not be "loved" properly. And Christian love is not running out and "doing good" and being a "nice boy."

Christian love is something else. It is treating fellow men as persons, understanding them and appreciating them with all their good and bad qualities, and treating them as potential saints, not as potential devils. It is helping people with no thought of reward or satisfaction. It is doing more than is required by

"ideals" or law or social custom. "Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him two miles" (Mat. 5:41). It is understanding and trying to get along with people you do not like, or who are your enemies. "Love your enemies." "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?" (Mat. 5:44, 46). It is feeling a sense of responsibility towards evil and enmity in the world. For it takes two to make a friendship and it takes two to make an enemy. What am I or what did I do to make that person or nation dislike me? That is a question prompted by Christian love. Christian love is spontaneous. You do not act because you must, but because you want to, because you're just made that way. There is no "ought" in love, no command, no law. It cometh truly out of the heart. Christian love also has in it strong elements of justice. This is what keeps it from being "mushy" and sentimental. Love does not mean that you will "let a man get away with murder" or that in the face of stubborn and persistent wrongdoing you will simply stand by helplessly pleading ("loving") the person to stop. "The Lord disciplines him whom he loves" (Hebrews 12:6). For example, a parent has to restrain and punish—sometimes violently—his child. This does not mean he does not love the child. Quite the contrary, he restrains the child *because* he loves him. He loves him so much that he does not want to see him form bad habits or character, therefore he corrects and "chastens" the child. And yet there is another side to love, too. For want of a better word, we will call it the freedom of love. That is, when you love a person you must not go too far in trying to reform him. In a strict sense, we have neither the right nor the power to reform another person. Loving and helping a person does not mean reforming him to what you think he ought to be. It actually means that you are merely helping him to understand himself and his situation so that he can help himself. Sentimental love is pitying an unfortunate person and then supposing that you are righteous and wise enough to tell him what to do and what to be. This is, in

fact, a disguised tyranny and is just as dangerous as an obvious tyranny. Christian love, on the other hand, is interested only in helping a man find his true self. For example, the sentimental love of a parent towards his child tries to shield that child from every possible harm, danger, trouble or anxiety. If it ever succeeded in so doing, it would smother and suffocate and actually destroy that child's personality. It would destroy it because it is only as a child meets and experiences trouble, danger, anxiety, that he becomes a person. Christian love, on the other hand, grants freedom to the child or adult and expects him to suffer trouble and problems, but is always there to help him to "adjust himself" to these things. This love, therefore, does not stifle, but helps him to grow. Thus, Christian love has the element of justice and responsibility in it, and also the element of freedom. It is a difficult balance and very hard to define precisely because it is all part of one principle, one action that springs from the very depths of a man's being. As we proceed, we shall try to elaborate on the nature of this Christian love.

We have described Christian love backwards! We have illustrated briefly what love towards man means. But Jesus said that thou shalt love God and thy neighbor as thyself. He put that idea in that order for a very good reason. It raises the whole problem of the relation of religion to ethics. It is such an essential question that in order to understand the Christian ethics, we have to answer this problem. It is also of primary importance today because of the very common belief that ethics is one thing and religion something else, and that all you need is ethics, not religion. Anywhere you go today you can ask someone what his formula is for a happy life, and almost invariably he will say the Golden Rule or the Ten Commandments. And how often we hear this, "so long as a man lives a good life, why bother with religion?" In short, most of us believe that if we have the right ideals and are sufficiently educated and intelligent, religion with its faith, its God, its Christ, and all that, is quite unneces-

sary. If this is true, then Christianity is a waste of time and its only possible value is that it contributed one or two good thoughts —of which we already have thousands from other sources. If the "right ethics" is all we need then our problem is simple and all religion is useless. But if the "right ethics" is not enough and if our problem of living is more complex than that, then religion is not only important, it is crucial and indispensable. There can be no halfway business about it. So what is the answer? To find the answer we have to look at the nature of man—are we able to achieve the "right ideals"; if not, why not?

4

DOCTRINE OF MAN

THE Christian view of man runs something like this: Man is a very complex being. He is a series of conflicting forces or paradoxes. Man loves and hates, laughs and cries; he is good and he is bad, he is selfish and he is unselfish, and so on. For every characteristic or quality we can name in a man, we can always find its opposite quality. That is why the optimist and the pessimist are both wrong in their estimate of human nature. The optimist looks at all man's good tendencies and concludes that man is essentially good; the pessimist just reverses the process. These two views are too simple; they do not see the profound paradoxes and contradictions that make up man's nature. Perhaps a little chart can illustrate our point:

Unconscious	*vs.*	Conscious
Nature	*vs.*	Spirit
Finitude	*vs.*	Infinitude
Creativity	*vs.*	Destructivity

These are the basic paradoxes or conflicting forces which are present in all of us. Thanks to modern psychiatry, all of us are familiar with the fact that much of our living is determined by unconscious drives and tendencies. But we are also aware of our conscious forces. Further, sometimes our conscious desires and powers are in conflict with our unconscious forces, and sometimes not. So, too, with the second paradox. Obviously, we are

rooted in nature and subject to the various natural laws of biology, physics, evolution, etc. But we are not wholly immersed in nature, we are also beyond and free of nature. We shall call this our spiritual side. That we have this side of us, free from nature, is indicated by the fact that we have imagination. This faculty is able to reach beyond time and space. For example, though my natural body is confined to a room, by imagination I can "picture myself" somewhere else—in another town, another country. By memory and anticipation, I can transport myself into the past or the future—hence my ability to go beyond mere time and space. Augustine elaborates this point with great profundity in Book X of his *Confessions*. Perhaps a clearer example of man's spiritual being and his partial independence of nature is his ability to criticize himself. Man alone has the faculty of being free enough from himself to examine himself. Moreover, we cannot only criticize ourselves, but we can then criticize our criticism. Indeed, you can do that almost endlessly! Also, our spiritual side appears whenever we begin to ask questions about the meaning and purpose of nature, of our life. These questions are "religious" or "spiritual." Nature does not ask questions, only spiritual beings can do that.

Thirdly, we know that we are finite creatures. We know that we do not live forever, we know that we do not know all the answers about life and our world. In short, we know that we are limited, finite creatures. We have within us some awareness, at least, of infinity. The very fact that we are aware of our finitude proves we have some awareness of infinity. If we were absolutely finite, we should not know it. For example, the only reason I know that I am inside a particular room of a building is because I know about other rooms, other buildings and the outdoors. But if I had been born and brought up in one room and never saw outside of that room, I should not know that this room was one among millions. I should think that the world was this one room. So we are finite creatures and yet not wholly finite.

Fourthly, we have in us creative forces and destructive forces. In psychiatry, this is sometimes called "the will to live" *vs.* "the will to die." In religion, we often call one love and the other sin. But whatever they are called, these forces are present in us. Many times we are aware of our tendency to destroy—we like to break windows sometimes for the sheer enjoyment of destroying something. But deeper than that, we can see that our destructive energies appear in all parts of life—in sex, in war, in gossip, in self-punishment, etc. Our creative powers, of course, need no elaboration in this vast new world of technological achievements.

A moment's thought, then, should make clear that all human beings have these paradoxical forces within their natures. Of course we have many more, but our point is that these conflicts are the basic ones and that the others are either variations of these or stem directly from them. Now it is important to note that most of the time these paradoxes are in conflict with each other. That is, our unconscious life is in conflict with our conscious life; natural appetites in conflict with our spiritual ones, and so on. This does not mean that one set of forces is bad and the other good. It would be a mistake, for example, to say that all the natural forces or tendencies are bad and the "spiritual" ones good. There is good and bad on both sides. The essential point here is that these conflicting and paradoxical forces in man produce tension. Indeed, we might describe our little chart as "The Tensions of Man." Wherever there is conflict there is tension, whether we are talking about physics, politics, or man. Because we have these conflicts within us, we are in tension, we have anxiety, we are "restless" or "insecure." This is the first and fundamental fact about human nature: our conflicting drives, desires, appetites, forces, thoughts, emotions, make us tense, anxious and insecure.

The second basic fact is an obvious one. We do not like this tension. We not only do not like it but we cannot stand it; we cannot "take it" for very long. So what do we do? The normal

thing to do is to seek escape from such tension—and this is the chief endeavor and struggle of life: to find some security, some peace in our being. From the Christian standpoint, almost all philosophies, other religions, ways of life—economic and political —represent some form of attempted escape from anxiety and tension. This is a very broad statement and therefore needs justification. What are man's various methods of escape and how can we assert that they are destructive escapes rather than creative solutions?

The methods of escape can be seen by again looking at the chart. Take the first tension—between the conscious and the unconscious. Take our friend Smith again. Like everybody else, he has conflicts and is anxious, restless; therefore, he seeks to escape his insecurity. He takes to excessive drinking or "playing around" sexually. This amounts to a retreat into his unconscious life because when he is drunk or emotionally excited, he is then relatively "free" from his conscious life. He is able to "forget everything." He has sloughed off his conscious life. His insecurity has driven him to a position where he can avoid conflict by pretending that there is no conscious power to conflict with his unconscious powers. Hence, no conflict, no tension—peace at last. Of course, this does not work because he can't be drunk or emotionally "lifted" all the time. The morning-after and its hangover will arrive shortly. Then he feels worse than he did before and so seeks more desperately to escape. Thus it is a terribly vicious circle. The more he escapes this way, the more insecure he gets, therefore the more frantic he gets, therefore the more frequently he seeks escape—until finally he will end in destruction, in one form or another (a psycho-neurotic, or chronic alcoholic, sex pervert, etc.).

For another example, look at the second tension—the conflict between nature and spirit. The modern and widely popular movement called naturalism is, from the Christian view, a highly articulate and refined escape from the problem of anxiety. This

method believes that if man abides by nature and its laws, uses his intelligence to do so and to control both himself and nature in an harmonious relationship, all will be well. The spiritual side of man is regarded either as an illusion or mere subjective and therefore erroneous opinion, indeed, only a rationalized ideology of selfish interests. Therefore, say the naturalists, we must "stick to the facts," to the laws and phenomena of nature. This is regarded as an escape, from the Christian viewpoint, because it attempts to slough off what cannot be sloughed off, namely, questions of meaning and purpose. Whether we like it or not, man is so built that he will always ask the question "Why?" He is so built that he cannot properly struggle and work unless he finds some sense, some meaning and purpose to his struggle. Such questions and emotions are not in nature. Most of what naturalism says about knowing facts and abiding by and controlling nature is right. But it doesn't say enough. When we get facts and laws, we still have to interpret those facts and ask what they mean and whether they are creative or destructive (good or bad) and how they shall be used. Take atomic power, for example, we need all the facts we can get about it. But how it shall be used and for what purposes is not a "natural" question, it is basically a spiritual question. For such a question presupposes some idea of values, of the meaning and purpose of life. Thus, naturalism is an escape because it seeks to avoid tension by pretending the spiritual side of man does not exist. If it does not exist, then there is no conflict between it and nature, and therefore no tension. The difficulty is that it does exist and is just as much a fact as nature itself. The logical outcome of naturalism, therefore, is to reduce us to scientific machines utterly devoid of "disturbing subjective opinions."

On the other hand, there are other forms of escape that are sometimes associated with and present in religion. Indeed, religion is used and perverted into an escape by many people. Many believe that our unconscious, natural finite tendencies are all

bad, while our conscious, spiritual and infinite tendencies are good. Therefore, they seek escape into the "good side" and believe that it is possible to get rid of the "bad side." This method of escape is illustrated in what are often called "other-worldly religions." This is the view which believes that while this world is quite evil and tragic, the next world is good and heavenly. Therefore, if you have faith enough and pray enough, you will be "saved" and get to heaven. Within this group are many who believe you can be saved now and here—that if you do not drink, or smoke, or indulge in sex, etc., you will be holy and pure on this earth. This is an escape into the "spiritual" and infinite. It is an escape because it believes that you can be free from their influences. That this is impossible is readily seen by the fact that to believe you are free from evil and sin is a very sinful statement—it displays the cardinal sin of pride and self-righteousness. The New Testament condemns this view when it says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8). Elementary understanding of psychology and honesty with one's self would indicate that this method is an escape, and actually produces more tension. It produces more because one is anxious lest he lose his "holiness." And such anxiety proves that he is not perfectly holy.

In most Oriental religions, this method of escape is used—also in Greek religion. Nature, the body, and finitude are regarded as evil and undesirable. Various disciplines and practices are used whereby one is supposed either to obtain release from these forces, or be able to control them. In the more profound of these views, it is recognized that only at death is this a real possibility. The influence of this view is still strong in America today and is exemplified in various groups which are labeled "perfectionist." There is a perfectionist group in religion which we have described above. There is also one in philosophy. Here among some thinkers, a method of escape is offered through reason. It is believed that by the cultivation and use of reason,

one can control emotion, passion, unconscious and natural impulses. This is the belief that one can escape to the conscious and infinite side of life, thereby reducing the conflict between these forces so that there is no tension. Here again, an elementary knowledge of one's self and psychology should make clear the futility of this method. And it is often demonstrated by the severe intensity and emotion with which a rationalist will defend his position or attack another's position.

Thus, from the Christian point of view, most of life and its various enterprises and programs represent man's desperate attempt to escape from his tension and anxiety. The tragedy is that these escapes only increase that anxiety and make him all the more desperate. The further tragedy is that if man gets too desperate, with the vast sources of power he now has he may kill himself believing that he is saving himself. Such an ultimate tragedy used to be regarded as the ravings of pessimistic madmen. Now in our atomic age it may appear as a sober and real possibility.

Looking at the nature of man in an even deeper perspective, the Christian viewpoint says this: Man not only has these various conflicts and resulting tensions, but underlying and permeating these conflicts is this one, all-inclusive conflict—the conflict between God and man. Man has one foot on Earth and one in Heaven, so to speak. This was partly suggested in our description of the conflict between nature and spirit. Of course, our chart is not altogether accurate. For you cannot chop human nature up into separate pieces and examine each piece by itself. In spite of man's conflicts, paradoxes and forces, he is a total unit. That is to say, we have a certain unity of personality. Whatever tendencies and qualities a man has, they are uniquely gathered into one whole unity. This totality and arrangement of factors differs in each person. That is why no one person is exactly like another. That is why it is a mistake to try to understand a person from just one point of view—be it religious,

psychological or physiological. We need to understand all these viewpoints, but we also have to view a person as a whole—if we are to know him. Taking this broad view, then, and in addition to all the other views of man, Christianity says that you cannot understand man's nature in its totality unless you see him as a person with "one foot in Earth and one foot in Heaven." We have already shown how man is rooted in Earth—subject to the natural laws of biology, chemistry, psychology. We have also hinted at how man is partly free from these laws, how he has another side that is not limited to nature. Carrying this further, it is the Christian view that because man has this spiritual side, he inevitably asks religious questions—what is the meaning of life, where do I fit into the scheme of things, is this worth while, is it good or bad, are life or "good causes" worth struggling for? etc. These are not just intellectual or academic questions—most of the time they are not put into words. But nevertheless, they are real and reflect their presence in man's ambitions, desires and emotions. Men do not sacrifice and die for purely "academic questions or ideals." Therefore, man not only seeks and wants answers to these questions, he also wants power to fulfill these answers. He wants the power to be important, to be somebody, to be happy, to solve his tensions. Thus, we may say that the spiritual side of man is the struggle to find meaning to life and to find the power to fulfill that meaning.

This part of man results in what is called "spiritual anxiety." We are so built that consciously and unconsciously we want and need some meaning and answer to life and its problems. We want attractive meaning and dynamic purpose in our life. But we seldom find it and so we are anxious. In religious language, Christianity says that there is an image of God in each person, a spirit or soul which seeks its Creator—God. Or, as St. Augustine put it, "That soul is restless until it finds its rest in God" (Book 1, Confessions). This is spiritual anxiety: the inner and inherent demand in us for dynamic meaning and purpose, for inner se-

curity and peace, for fufillment. This demand or pressure is always present and is perhaps our basic "drive." Since most of us do not know of this or because we cannot find the fulfillment we are anxious and restless. This spiritual anxiety is profound and deep-rooted and it is often this anxiety which prompts us to sin. Since we cannot stand this anxiety any more than other severe anxieties, we get desperate and seek destructive escape.

Thus, it is right at this point that man's biggest conflict and therefore his biggest tension occur. To find meaning and power in life—that is his most profound "drive." Yet it is the Christian affirmation that man does not possess either the answer or the power. But man thinks he does! And this is what we call sin. Man believes that he can solve the problems of his conflicts and tensions by his own abilities and resources. And human history might be viewed as the dramatic attempt to prove that belief. Christianity flatly denies that man can solve his own problems.

Is it any wonder, then, that the doctrine of sin is such an offense to men? It is an offense because it hits us where it hurts the most—our pride and self-esteem. Sin is a doctrine quite unacceptable to the modern mind. It is regarded as a hangover from medieval superstition and mumbo-jumbo. The modern mind rejects this doctrine for two reasons: first, because it offends modern pride in all its forms. Second, because it is largely misunderstood—and part of this misunderstanding has been caused by certain elements in the Church itself.

Sin is not sex, drinking, playing cards, smoking or going around with those who do. Sin is not necessarily the many so-called "bad deeds"—stealing, cheating, graft, etc. Sin is an inner condition of character, an attitude. Specifically defined, sin is the revolt against God. In modern language, sin is the belief and attitude which says that man is self-sufficient, that he is the "master of his fate and the captain of his soul." Thus, sin is pride—the pride of man which believes he can save himself from himself (his conflicts and tensions). The word "pride" should

not be confused with pride used in the sense of "snobbishness," nor respect for achievement. Nor again, should it be identified with the numerous little affections we have for our various abilities or vanities. As it is used here, pride has a much larger meaning; one which is more akin to the idea of self-efficiency, or, as Webster's dictionary puts it, "inordinate self-esteem." This type of pride is not just a vain whim, but a deep-seated attitude which may take several basic forms. There is the pride of the mind or reason—which believes that man's problems can be solved, life's meaning obtained, and the power to fulfill it—by the cultivation of reason. If only men will be rational and objective and use their reason instead of their passions, life's conflicts can be solved. This was the great hope of the age of reason—which ended in the age of tyrannical violence. There is the pride of the will—the belief that if a man tries hard enough, wants a thing intensely enough and applies his will power to get it, he will achieve it. This is the rugged "go-getter" philosophy. This leads either to tyranny, self-deceit, or frustration. It may lead to tyranny because in a man's eagerness to get something he may forget other people's wills and step on them in order to achieve his own end. It may lead to self-deceit because, when a man gets what he wants, he often finds that that isn't what he really wants. But so much effort has been spent that he does not want to admit to himself the uselessness of his struggle, so he pretends that he is content. Or, lastly, it usually leads to frustration because of the reason above and because his aggressiveness inevitably clashes and is limited by other people's wills. Therefore, he is forced to compromise, is thwarted. The more he is thwarted, the more aggressive he becomes, and so on—another vicious circle.

Then there is also spiritual pride—which is the most subtle and dangerous of all prides. This is the belief that through a certain "religious discipline" or doing of "good deeds" one can become pure and holy and "saved." This is the "bargain theory of salvation." It tries to make a bargain with God. It says in

effect: "If I do a certain number of prayers, go to church regularly, and do a certain number of good deeds each day, then God will make me holy." This is Phariseeism, and completely ignores Jesus' emphasis upon inward motives and character. It is the worst kind of sin because it imagines that sin can be conquered by the efforts of man. It is dangerous precisely because it is "religious" and invokes the name of God against all opponents. It is subtle because its motive is essentially a selfish desire for salvation in the name of unselfish "religious" devotion. It is unethical because these are the people who are afraid to take resolute ethical action for fear of dirtying their hands in the evil of the world.

There are many other forms of pride. In general, these can all be grouped under some form of what is called humanism. Humanism believes that man is the measure of all things, that mankind can solve its problems, is the master of its own destiny. This pride, says Christianity, is what we call sin. This is the fundamental issue of all religion and ethics. All other problems depend on this. If it is possible for man by his own powers and abilities and resources to solve his conflicts and tensions, the meaning of life, then obviously, religion, God, faith, Christ, are utterly useless. If man is God, then why bother with any other God? If we have sufficient wisdom and power to solve life's problems, then why seek wisdom and power from beyond man? Thus, unless a man believes in the sin and insufficiency of man, it does no good to talk to him about Christianity. This is the one crucial issue: "Is or is not man able to save himself?"

Christianity says that man is not able to save himself, and for these reasons: First, take the individual person. Christianity says any given individual has the conflicts and tensions we described above, and he *is* the totality of tensions. To be sure, a man can always control some of the forces within himself, but he cannot control all of them or eliminate any of the fundamental conflicts. Secondly, an individual person is finite and cannot, by definition,

know all the answers to life. More important, every person has sin in one form or another. This fact of sin continually impels a man to seek one of the many escapes from tension in the belief that such an escape is not an escape but the solution to his problems. This sin also impels a man to put his own interests first as over against someone's else. This prevents a man from being rational and objective. We are all "fair and objective" up to a point. But when the chips are down and it is a question of my money *versus* yours, or my life against yours, you are going to be the loser if I have my way and can get it. This sin, this inordinate self-interest is the cause of conflict and destruction in life. So long as we have this powerful factor at the very core of our character, neither reason nor will power, nor ideals, nor economic programs, nor education, will ever solve this problem. Indeed, we will use all these things in the service of our private desires. Sin corrupts these things and perverts them to its own use. Sin uses reason to rationalize its wants, it uses ideals to hide its real intentions, it manipulates economic policies to suit its needs. A moment's honest reflection should make this clear—for we all do these things. The individual person, then, cannot save himself; he cannot escape from his conflicts and tensions, he has neither the wisdom nor the power.

However, most moderns nowadays, at long last, do agree that an individual person cannot pull himself up by his own bootstraps. Yet they still retain the belief that mankind as a whole can save mankind. Here, it is asserted, is the solution. To be sure, single individuals cannot solve the vast complexities of life, but men taken together can. Here the idea is that the bits of wisdom and power that each man has can be pooled together for the common good. Thus, you take the best of man and add it all up together and you will have enough to save mankind. This is an enticing and attractive view. The difficulty is, strangely enough, a very simple one. You cannot just pluck out and pile up the good qualities of men. Whether you want to or not, you

will also pluck out and pile up the bad qualities of men. Whenever men get together, whether it be around a peace table, a board meeting, a labor meeting, a United Nations meeting, you will have there or represented there not just the good ideas and intentions of people—you will have total personalities involved and represented—the good, the bad, the indifferent. How could you possibly carry only "good and true" ideas to any conference? The self-interests of all are there, too—in the flesh, in person. At any given period in history, you can "accumulate" any number of good ideas and good people. Further, even a superficial look at society should make clear to us the truth that individuals are much more rational, moral, and good, than groups of people. One person seldom lynches another person, but a mob will. One person seldom does what a nation does. One person seldom dares to say "myself right or wrong, but right or wrong, me first." But a collection of the same persons will not only say but will act on "my country right or wrong, but right or wrong my country first." Thus, it is possible to say in a general way that, relatively speaking, individual man is fairly moral compared to immoral society.* Indeed, the conflicts and tensions of individual persons are piled exceedingly high in society. Here the conflicts are the same but they are much more obvious and intense and violent. The good and the bad grow together and only make their tension greater. Thus it seems flatly contradictory to human history and experience to believe that mankind can save itself even though an individual person cannot. The truth of the matter is, from the Christian viewpoint, neither a man nor mankind can save itself.

Finally, another reason why Christianity asserts that man cannot save himself is that man is so built that he seeks God whether he knows it or not, that the facts of experience and history prove that man in his attempt to solve the tension of existence, inevitably seeks God—either a god or gods. And if he does not

Cf. Reinhold Niebuhr's book *Moral Man and Immoral Society.*

find God, or if he denies God, he will create one. He cannot live without one. For the purpose of this point, we will define God as "that which gives meaning to a man's life," or "that to which man gives his allegiance," or "that upon which man trusts his life." Thus, if a man believes that he can be happy and solve life's problems by the accumulation of money, we may say that that man's god is money. Other people believe if they can attain power, or social prestige, life will be meaningful. Power and social position are thus the god for many people. For others, the state is god, or some particular economic or political system. Still others believe that marriage or sex, or culture or business success will bring them happiness and meaning. These are their gods. People will serve these gods with all degrees of loyalty even to the point of dying for them. This zeal shows the religious character of these gods.

So, while few people believe in the Christian God, nearly everyone believes and has some kind of god. We are built that way. Human nature is so constructed that we have to have a god. We need desperately something outside ourselves which draws and attracts our energies, something which gives meaning and purpose to our lives, something which we can hope for and trust in. That is why there are really few atheists in the world. Most people who call themselves atheists merely mean that they do not believe in the God of Christianity. But actually they believe in some other god—the god of self, or reason, or money, or the state. The only true atheist is he who says that life has no meaning whatsoever, all is futile and tragic; man is a stupid, doomed cog in the vast machine of the universe. Some few people assert this, but they do not really believe it themselves. Because if this were true, the only logical thing to do would be to commit suicide. That they do not, betrays the fact that somewhere they think that their life is just a bit better than tragic—even if they exist only for a few fleeting "pleasures." At any rate, what is important to note is that man has to have a god; he consciously

or unconsciously seeks a god. In order to live, we must make sense out of life, otherwise we cease to struggle. This, of course, next raises the problem of which god shall we follow, of how one can assert that the Christian God is the one true God while all others are false. It is not our purpose to go into a comparative study of the world's religions here. That is another lengthy problem and essentially one of faith. For our purposes, it is necessary to distinguish the difference between the gods of money, power, economics, society, self and the Christian God. The difference is this: when a man's god is a state, or power or success, such a god is a false one. It is false because such a thing as money or the state is obviously only one thing among others; it is only a particular thing in life—one state among other states, one job among other jobs, one person among others, etc. Now if you "worship" and bet your life on one particular thing in life, you are trying to make it a universal. That is, you are assuming that it is the one truth or reality that makes the world go around, that gives meaning to all else in life. Thus, for example, some people say that everything in life can be explained by glands, or by "the economic motive," or "environment," or by "self-preservation motive." But these are obviously too narrow. They explain a lot of things, but not all. No married couple could ever believe that their love is purely economic or glandular in origin. To say so is to rule out other truths and factors. Thus, when a man's god is any particular thing in life, it is at once limited, narrow, and not wholly true. This is the definition of idolatry. Idolatry is taking a particular thing or truth in life and trying to make it universal and all-inclusive. To worship one little facet of truth as if it were the whole truth is to shut one's self off from all other truth and deny that it even exists. Therefore, this little god actually lands us in error.

Lastly, if we worship and follow these false gods we end up in conflict and despair. They do not solve our anxieties. This is because if I worship the god of power, it does not satisfy my

need for love. If I worship and follow the god of the state and that state is defeated in war, my god is defeated. This is what happened in Nazi Germany and the despair of the Nazis was very great. If my god is success and I do not attain it, my god and my life seem to be futile. And in my struggle to follow one of these gods, I will meet others struggling for other gods. They stand in my way. There is a conflict. All claim they are right. Who shall say whether the god of power, or of economics, or of pleasuse or of the state is the one true god and that all others should give way? One particular thing has no right to say that is not particular, but universal. If it does it becomes a tyrant and that is why so many movements in history become fanatically destructive. They can tolerate no opposition, no criticism. They are right absolutely and completely; therefore by definition everyone else is wrong and is "impeding the progress of history." False gods, then, are false not only because they are partial, but because they lead us into conflict and destruction and because history itself defeats them.

From this it should follow that if man is to worship and have a god that is creative, universal and eternal, that god must not be a particular in life. It must be infinite, all-inclusive, and indestructible. It must contain the seeds of all of the truth and reality, not just part of it. It must be a god which gives meaning and power to all parts of life. It must be a god which cannot be equaled or equated by any particular or group of particulars. It must be the center of truth and life. It must be forever permanent and real so that it does not depend upon the successes and failures in history, something upon which man can lean and trust with no fear of betrayal. Any god less than this will betray man. It is the Christian faith that God—the one and only God—is infinite, eternal, Truth, Reality, Power. How one can "know" or "prove" that is a problem beyond the scope of this book. What is important here is to understand the fact that if man does not find God, he will find or create other gods which

are idols. He does this because he has to in order to live. Man's nature is such that he has to have a god, that is, he has to have something which will give him some meaning and purpose in life, something which will solve his anxiety.

We have digressed a long way from the subject of ethics, but not without reason. For if we have noticed the trend of the arguments, the discussion of ethics has led us straight into the subject of religion. We have tried to show why ethics alone is inadequate. It is inadequate because man does not have the power to fulfill moral ideals. As Paul stated, "I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate" (Romans 7:15). So, too, with us. Most of the time we know what is right, but we fail to do it and then give all sorts of excuses and reasons why we didn't do it. What we need, therefore, is not more moral ideals, but more power to fulfill the ideals we already have. This element of power is the domain of religion. The understanding of why we need this power and how one can get it is the province of religion. Thus, you cannot have ethics without religion. Ethics without religion degenerates into hypocrisy. We have and say we believe in all kinds of nice ideals, but we cannot achieve them. This leads to hypocrisy, or to despair. But the reverse is true, too. You cannot have religion without ethics. Religion without "good deeds" soon degenerates into pious hypocrisy and self-righteousness. We believe we are pure and holy and righteous but fail to put this to practical service in the help of others. Religion and ethics are inseparable and necessary to each other.

5

SUMMARY

LET us then summarize the basic principle of Christian ethics. The one basic principle is love; love which includes the elements of justice and mercy, righteousness and understanding, resolute action and responsibility. Since this is the basic principle, Christian ethics is not legalistic; it is not just another set of rules or ideals. It includes ideals but goes further by considering the motives, intentions, and character of people. This, then, is Christian ethics —love. Yet this cannot be separated from the religious foundation. The Christian religion offers us insights into the nature of man, and if we are to know what love is and how we can obtain it we must turn to the Christian faith.

Finally, the principle of love must be translated into action. In applying this principle to the problem of living, it is also necessary to use the Christian religion in order to analyze and understand what the issues and problems are. The remainder of this book will be a study of how we put this basic principle of love into action, and of how ethics and religion are inseparable as soon as we do act.

PART II

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Christian Ethics in Action

The Application of Love

1

WAR AND PEACE

THE problem of war and peace affords an excellent illustration of putting one's ethics into action and the problems involved in such a responsibility. In the past, there has been much confusion about the Christian's rôle in war. Both pacifist and nonpacifist tended to make the problem too simple and the answer too simple. This led to bitterness between the two groups and to frequent changes in opinion. While the basic principle of Christian ethics is simple in the sense that it is contained in the word love, the application of this is always very difficult and complex. We will do well to remember that there is no one simple answer to any of life's complicated problems. In fact, we should be suspicious of anyone who claims he has an easy and simple answer to any problem.

In the problem of war, there are several things to consider before we can make a decision as to our responsibility for action. The first thing to consider is that war is not essentially different from peace as we are apt to think it is. To anyone who has fought in battle, such a statement seems like a downright lie. If one has crouched in a foxhole while shells have burst around him, one can truly say that there is a real difference between that and sitting in a comfortable chair at home. That is true. But in a larger sense, there is no essential difference between war and peace. What we mean is this: there are various conflicts of all kinds in peacetime —economic and industrial strife, ideological differences, trade conflicts, political tensions, competitions, suspicions, etc. All these

conflicts within and between nations exist in peacetime. So long as those conflicts do not break out into violence and the use of arms, we say that we are at peace. Peace is a stable equilibrium of conflicting forces. But when this balance is upset and nations use violence on a large scale, we say that we are at war. War then is usually the result of an accumulation of long-standing conflicts. War is the result of failure to settle conflicts when they first appeared. Because of this, the conflicts grow and multiply until they become violent. Thus, peacetime is conflict but not violence; wartime is conflict with violence. This is important to remember because the problem is not so much one of violence but of conflict. What is our Christian responsibility and attitude towards conflict? This is the nub of the problem.

The second thing to consider is the cause of war. Here again most people adopt a too simple answer. In World War II, many people said that Hitler, Mussolini and Hirohito caused the war. If that were true, how easy it would have been to stop the war! All we should have had to do would have been to remove those three men from power—either by killing them or removing them some other way. This is the "war-monger" theory of war. This theory believes that two or three very evil men secretly plot a world war and rub their hands in fiendish delight at the plan of having a nice big war. This view fails to account for the support given these men by millions of people. It fails to account for all the conflicts which make war almost inevitable. Finally, it is essentially a naïve and irresponsible view of human nature. It is lazy thinking and childish wishfulness to believe that all the world's people are good, all conflicts can be solved easily, but that two or three devils upset the whole thing.

Other people assert that war is caused by purely economic causes, or political differences, or ideological conflicts. Solve the economic conflicts and all will be well, they say. Or others believe that if only all other countries had a democracy like ours, there would be no conflict, no war. The trouble with these views

is that they also adopt too simple an answer. To be sure, there are economic, political, and ideological causes of war. But to pick out just one of these factors and say that that is the one and only or major cause of war is to ignore all the other causes. Some wars have been more due to economic conflicts than to ideological conflicts. On the other hand, some wars have been due to religious differences rather than economic. From the Christian viewpoint, wars are caused by *all* these conflicts and more. Christianity asserts that conflict in life—war or peace—originally stems from man's selfishness (sin). I want something; you want it, too. We, as a nation, want power and security; so do other nations. Herein appears conflict. Thus, economic, political and ideological factors are expressions, symptoms of man's basic drives and desires. Wars are caused by man's sin. This does not mean that economics and politics are bad in themselves. Not at all. They may be either good or bad or somewhere in between. Economics and politics can be expressions of the good in man as well as his evil. What is important to understand is not just an economic or political problem. War is a *human* problem, a problem of human nature, a problem of sin.

This is important to understand because so many people believe that if only we solve the economic problem, or the political, or the social problem, war will disappear forever. Such is not the case. For no matter what solution is achieved, if man himself is not changed, he will corrupt and change that solution to meet his own desires and drives. This does not mean that we should ignore economic and political improvements. Indeed, we should always seek their solutions. But we must go farther and seek to improve man—otherwise we will always have war. This we must never forget: man and his sin are the cause of war; and economics, politics, and ideas are expressions of man's desires and needs.

With this introduction, let us come to the ethical problem. Shall a Christian fight in a war? What is our standard or prin-

ciple? It is love. One ethical problem is to put love into concrete action. As a Christian, how can I best express love in this situation, *i.e.,* war? That is the approach we must take. At first glance, we would think that to kill our enemies is a flat contradiction to Jesus' statement "Love thy neighbor" and the injunction "Love thine enemies." Many people stop right there and so become pacifists. But the problem is not as easy as that. Take World War II as an example. What caused the war? Hitler alone did not; he was a product of the conflicts which led to the war. There were many causes—some for which we were responsible. Germany, after World War I, was economically insecure. The Allies partly contributed to that insecurity. Germany was also politically insecure. Psychologically and ideologically, she was not democratically minded. When people are insecure they are seldom democratic. They want security and power; they want to be like other people who have comfort and prestige. In order to obtain this a strong leader seems necessary. Hitler appeared as that kind of a leader. Germans supported him because they believed that he would bring them security, power and prestige such as America and Britain had. And when you want a thing badly enough, you will often overlook apparent evils. When you are desperate, you will often take desperate methods—justifying them with the familiar phrase, "the good ends justify the means." Lastly, when, night and day, you are under the watch of a Gestapo, only a few heroic martyrs will resist. Most of us will "go along with the crowd" rather than sacrifice our lives. These, then, were some of the causes. Thus, Germany took off and traveled the road of aggression, persecution, and conquest.

"Love thy neighbor!" But who is my neighbor? My neighbor is not only Germany, but Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Denmark, Belgium and the rest of Europe. Problem: How can I express love concretely to both Germans and their victims? If

I refuse to fight against the Nazis, I may be expressing "love" towards them. But in so doing, I am not expressing love towards the Nazis' victims. It is double talk to say that you love the Czechs and are expressing it by saying you feel sorry for them and that if you get a chance you will come over and bind up their wounds and feed them. After the war, it is an expression of love to help revive the victims of Hitler. But that is after the war and presupposes that the aggression will have been defeated. Our problem is what is the Christian going to do now—before and at the start of the war? If you love Nazis, then, how can you love the victims of the Nazis? The answer is that we cannot express that love equally towards both parties. It would be nice if we could, but life isn't that easy. So what can we do?

Earlier we said that Christian love includes the element of justice and righteousness in it. This means that we must first make a moral distinction between Nazi Germany and its victims. Thus, the Christian looks at Nazism with all its immoral race persecutions, its desires for world domination, its pride and arrogance and cruelty, its tortures, its Dachaus, its conquest of Austria and others. Regardless of the faults of other countries in Europe, it is clear that Germany is wrong. It is the responsibility of a Christian to stand for the right; it is his duty to oppose the wrong. He must take sides. Thus, we stood against Nazism and for the more right principles which were represented by the other countries. Our decision then was to express our love concretely towards the victims of Hitler. How could this be done? It would have been nice if we could have persuaded Hitler to abandon his policies. At Munich, we found out that there was no use in "moral persuasion," that such a method played right into his hands and was, in fact, what he actually counted upon us to do. Soon we learned that the only method by which we could really help the people of Europe was force, war, violence. The only way we could free the enslaved millions of Europe,

liberate the prisoners, remove the tyrant was by defeating Nazi Germany in war. And in the long run, this may have helped the German people, too.

But at what a cost! Was this end justified by the horrible means—the millions dead, the thousands of innocent children killed by bombs, cities devastated, people maimed for life? Wouldn't it have been better for Europe to have endured the tyranny, quietly resisting it until one day it fell of its own inner corruption? Have not all tyrannies collapsed eventually? Wouldn't it have been better to wait until this one fell—rather than indulge in such slaughter? This is the pacifist argument and it cannot be ignored. The pacifist position believes that war does not solve problems; it only creates more problems. It believes that the use of violence is in itself an evil and that nonviolent means of resistance are more beneficial and effective in the long run. And in the short run it involves less carnage and killing than does violence. It also claims that thereby you are expressing love both towards the enemy and his victim. There is much to be said for this view and it is obvious that such a view is consistent with the Christian faith. For the pacifist takes love seriously and tries to put it into practice. Here then is another dilemma. Here are two Christians, both believers in the same religion and in the same ethical principle. Yet they differ radically in applying that principle in action. How can this be? Does that make Christian ethics useless because it offers no agreement?

The answer can best be given if we use an analogy. Like all analogies, it is good only up to a point and cannot be carried too far. Take the analogy or example of this situation: If I am walking down the street and a man stops me and tries to rob me, as a Christian, what shall I do? The Christian ethics demands that I love this man. Therefore, I try and persuade the man not to rob me but to tell me what he needs, why he is in this situation, why he thinks that robbery is the only way out, and what can I do to help him? Here I am recognizing him as

a person and as a man in need of help. Perhaps this man will respond to my interest and an admirable solution is achieved. But the chances are that he will regard me as a "smart phoney" trying to save his watch. He therefore resists all my persuasions and overtures. It is my watch or else. There is nothing in the New Testament which says that I should keep my watch at all costs. So I have to give him my watch. But then the thought suddenly occurs to the man that he had better kill me because I might be able to identify him later on. There is also nothing in the New Testament which says that I can save my life as over against someone's else. I may struggle and wrestle with the man in order to prevent him from shooting me. But in so doing I cannot claim that it is my Christian responsibility to do so—except that if I have the motive I am saving him from murder. But if it is merely my life against his, nothing in the Christian faith says that it shall be my life which is saved instead of his. This is a hard statement, but Jesus never said that being a Christian was easy. Quite the contrary. This situation would be my cross. Here, then, I am a pacifist. But let us suppose that the man did not kill me but went away after he took my watch. The next day, let us say, I am walking down the street again and see the same man attacking a woman. Here the issue is different. It is not a question of my life *vs.* the man's life; it is not a conflict between the man and me. Here, I am the relatively innocent bystander. What is my responsibility here? As a Christian, I cannot ignore this conflict and "walk by on the other side." I must take part. What is the principle? It is love. I must express it towards both the man and the woman. But how? If I go up to the man and try and persuade him to leave the woman alone, he will probably tell me to mind my own business. I reply that this *is* my business. If I can persuade him to go away, I will have expressed love concretely towards both people. But in the majority of cases, this would not happen. The issue would soon arise as to whether I would use force on the

man— even to the point of killing him. If I argued and persuaded and even used some force on him, but he still persisted, I would have to make up my mind whether I would abandon the struggle and thereby abandon the woman, or continue until I killed the man in order to save the woman. If I do not kill the man, I can say that I have loved him. But I cannot say I expressed love concretely towards the woman. For in abandoning the struggle, the woman is killed by the man. On the other hand, if I kill the man, I can say I expressed love concretely towards the woman, but not so towards the man. In either case, my hands are dirty. There is no possible way in which I could have expressed love perfectly and equally. There is no possible way in which I could do a perfectly good deed. There is blood on my hands either way, and there is righteousness in my heart either way. I would say that there was more righteousness if I had killed the man in order to save the woman. I say this because in such a decision, a moral distinction was made; the man was more in the wrong than the woman. And I believe that it is essential to make such moral decisions in life. However, not all Christians would agree to this interpretation. What is important in this example is this: (1) Wherever a conflict is merely between my life and yours, the Christian is a pacifist; (2) but when the conflict is between two other people or nations, the Christian can be either pacifist or nonpacifist. But whichever position he takes, he must realize that it is not perfect. Neither pacifist nor nonpacifist can ever assert that his action is the only possible and right action. Both are right and both are wrong; (3) in all ethical problems in life involving more than two people, there is never any simple, perfect, or wholly righteous solution for the individual making the decision and consequent action.

When this is applied to the war problem it should be clear that the Christian can never assert that his nation is wholly right and the enemy nation wholly wrong. There can be no Holy

Wars for a Christian. The conflict is never between saints and devils. The conflict is always between human beings of varying degrees of goodness. Thus, when we fight in a war, humility becomes us. The issues for which we stand must be more right than the issues against which we contend. But we cannot deceive ourselves into thinking that we are perfect and our enemies all wrong. Thus, in World War II, it was clear that the way of life represented by Nazism was wrong. It was, and is, also clear that our way of life has many wrongs in it, but it is better than the Nazi way. The choice, then, was between relative goods and evils. The victims of Hitler were not saints; many of the countries he conquered were nowhere near perfect, but nevertheless, they were less evil than Hitlerism.

If a Christian waits until one side is absolutely and perfectly good before he defends it, he will wait eternally. No way of life, no person, no part of a conflict is ever perfect. Therefore, we cannot withhold ethical activity until one side of an issue is perfect. If we did we would never act at all. No, we must decide which is the relatively better side and then support that and try to improve it as we work for it. In other words, the Christian is going to get his hands dirty in the struggles of life. It is folly to pretend that he can participate in the conflicts of life without being involved in the weaknesses and evils present in every conflict. Not to take sides at all is a sin because it is cowardly irresponsibility. To take sides means you will be plunged into situations and conflicts which, however much good there is present in them, also have many evils in them. It is like rescuing a man caught in a mud quagmire. It would be nice if you could build a fine clean cement pavement right down to his feet and then gently lead him out. But you cannot help him that way. You have to get boards and rope and plunge right down in the mud with him and haul him out. There is a lot of mud in the world and all of us are spattered with it and if we are going to live and be a part of the world we must work right in the

middle of it and get dirty. It is unavoidable. This is the way life is built and it does no good to sit back and wish it wasn't built that way.

What is important, then, is that whether we be pacifist or nonpacifist about war, we must realize that neither position is perfect. To participate in war in order to rescue enslaved people or principles inevitably involves one in terrible slaughter and carnage. Not to participate in war in order to avoid such slaughter inevitably involves one in the prolongation of the agonies of the enslaved. Blood is on our hands, sin we commit, humility becomes us. And yet we act with a righteous motive and intent, and act with resolute action, and for a righteous purpose. This seems perhaps to be a mass of contradictions, but actually it is true. Any other way will not stack up against the facts of experience and human nature. The most unbearable person in the world is he who imagines that all that he does is obviously perfect and righteous and that all would be well if the rest of us were as good as he is! The Christian knows that life is more complex and tragic than that.

Thus far, we have discussed what the Christian does when two other nations go to war. We must now look at the problem of what to do when the issue is war between our country and another country. Many people would wonder why this is even considered a problem. For these people believe that there is no question but that everyone should defend his country when it engages in war. This is the "my country right or wrong" doctrine. It is blind obedience to the state; it makes the state a god. It was an ironic thing in World War II to see believers in this doctrine severely criticize the Germans for fighting to the last ditch for Hitler! On the other hand, certain religious people use our analogy of my life *vs.* yours and say that one should never defend his country because to do so is essentially selfish. From our perspective, both views are superficial and inadequate. The first view is wrong because it makes the state a god—which it

isn't. And if one followed the doctrine he might very well find himself fighting for a wrong instead of against it. The second view is wrong because the issue is not just my life *vs.* your life. There are one hundred and forty million other people in our country and we have a responsibility towards them. The real issue and problem is similar to the other war situation described above. The problem is which country is more right than the other? Thus, for example, if our country should embark on a war of aggression and conquest against Mexico and Central America, our country would be wrong. It would be the duty of the Christian to fight against his own country. Why? Because the loyalty of the Christian is larger than that to his country. His first loyalty and devotion are to God and His will. If his country's policies conflict with the laws of God, then the Christian is duty bound to oppose those policies. The so-called "enemies" of our country would be more in the right than our people, therefore, we must help them. Whether one chooses to use violent or nonviolent means is up to the individual Christian.

This is a critical point for, if the situation did arise where our country was the aggressor, it would be a very hard ethical decision to make. In the first place, most of our information would tell us that it was Mexico who was the wrongdoer. Our whole program would be justified with high-sounding reasons. It would take considerable discernment for the Christian to discover the true facts. Secondly, if he opposed his country, he would be called a "traitor," a "yellow-livered coward." He would be a social outcast and probably thrown into prison, perhaps shot. With this situation facing him, it could take a great deal of courage and bravery to stand and act upon his convictions. Yet that is the course he must follow if he is to be a real Christian. That is the way Christianity was born, the way it survived, the way it grew. That is why Christianity is no religion for "sissies," that is why it is not a religion of mere comfort or an "opiate of the people." The Christian ethic is a tough religion. And if we

think that this situation is merely an "academic" one, we might well remember that it was exactly this problem that all European Christians had to decide when Hitler was their master. Many were weak and took the easy road of following along. But there were the courageous and dedicated few who took the hard road. Many were killed and tortured, but their course of action was a sharp thorn in Hitler's side, and Christianity won new respect and new integrity by their sacrifice.

If our country is in the right in a conflict, then by the same principle and the same reasoning we would defend it. We would defend not our country as such, but the principles or policies for which it stands. Our loyalty again is not primarily to the country, but to God and His laws of right and wrong—love (justice, righteousness, mercy, etc.). However, perhaps our examples have been too clear-cut. Then the problem arises as to what a Christian would do if his country was equally as guilty as the enemy country. We have already said that no country is ever wholly right or wholly wrong, that the choice is always between relative goods and evils. Therefore, what to do if both countries are just as bad as each other? Actually, I believe that this is the "academic" problem. While we always have only a relative choice, I would say that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the conclusion that there is no moral distinction possible is a false conclusion. Before the war, many people said that there was no moral difference between German and British imperialism, therefore a "plague on both their houses." This was the result of moral laziness and blindness. There were obvious degrees of imperialism. One could not say that the British policy in India was just as bad as the Nazi policy in Poland. To find no moral difference in a problem means that we have not searched hard enough, have not been sensitive enough. But for the sake of the argument let us suppose that there is actually no difference. Which side will the Christian join? The answer is that he will join both sides and yet join neither side. If his own country

is involved, this still holds true. His course of action will be pacifist and nonresistant. That is to say, he would probably contribute to the relief of suffering on both sides. If he fights for one side, he is betraying the other. He is not expressing genuine love. He is assuming there is a moral difference when there is none. He is working for the good that is present in both, and working against the evil that exists in both. At the same time, he must be very careful that he is not assuming that he as an individual is more righteous and holy than those whom he is helping. As a citizen of one country, he is partly responsible for the evils of his country. He, too, is a guilty man. His course of action would be difficult and would require much sacrifice. So far as I know, however, there has never been a war in history where this was the real problem. And there is no evidence that a Christian specifically asserted moral equality in a conflict and then ministered to both sides. People have helped relieve suffering on both sides—as have the Red Cross and the Quakers. But there is no evidence that a nonpacifist Christian ever found himself in this situation.

Before summarizing this discussion, let us look at the problem of violence and nonviolence, power and persuasion. The Christian pacifist maintains that the use of violence is, by its own nature, evil. The pacifist believes in resistance to evil, but not violent resistance. Force and violent power are therefore regarded as inherently evil, while nonviolent methods of power are looked upon as at least better, if not good. If this be true, then, says the pacifist, one cannot use violence as a means to an end, regardless of how noble the end may be. Since violence is evil, one must not indulge in it for any reason. It is this writer's opinion that such a view is a modern rather than a biblical theory. There is no discussion in the Bible about violent *vs.* nonviolent means of resistance. If the biblical quotation, "Resist not evil," is to be used out of its context, as it frequently is, then it denies all resistance and makes no distinction between forceful or per-

suasive means. Also, there is nothing in the Bible which says that power is evil in itself, or that the absence of force is good in itself. It may be granted that a possible interpretation of love is that love cannot be forced and displayed through violence. That is true. But if one includes the element of justice in his idea of love, then some factor of power is both necessary and inevitable. Moreover, this element is present throughout the Bible. "The Lord chasteneth whom he loveth." Here, like human parents, is the truth that children ofttimes have to be restrained and disciplined and sometimes with force. Yet the parent does not love his child less because he restrains and chastens him. Thus, it is difficult to see how one can say that force and power are evil in themselves. Indeed, one can point out that spiritual propaganda, such as the Nazis used, can corrupt and destroy men, women, and children with devilish efficiency. This is a nonviolent method, but it is equally devastating. Moreover, a madman on the loose, bent on murder, will not succumb to rational and loving appeals. He can only be stopped by force. To be sure, we all *wish* he could be curbed by reason. But wishing does not make it so. The fact is that only force can stop him. To this, someone might reply that if we really loved a person or a country, they would respond to our appeal. This view does not understand the sin in human nature. And it might be well to recall that even Christ himself did not turn all men's hearts. Those who killed him remained unmoved by the tragic drama of the cross. It is a little presumptuous, therefore, for us to imagine that we possess a more superior gift of love than did Our Lord.

Violence and force are sometimes terrible things, particularly in our age. And it is right that we should seek all other methods and means in fighting evil. But when these fail, as they often do, it is necessary to use violence, or else we contribute to the extension of evil by failing to stop it, like a forest fire that rages through beautiful virgin timber. It would be nice if we could just blow on it and put it out. But that won't work. The only

way a large fire can be stopped is by starting a cross-fire. This means we actually and deliberately burn more virgin timber. Yet only by that sacrifice can we stop the conflagration and save other good timber.

One further point should be mentioned here. The decision to participate or not in a war cannot be made entirely from the point of view of the individual. There is the problem of the state. It should be apparent that life could not be lived without some form of orderly government. The state is the organization which provides this order. And since there are always people and groups of people, within and/or without the community who threaten it, the state must have power to defend itself. The police power of the state may thus actually be an instrument of love, for it seeks to insure the livelihood of its people. Thus, if a reasonably ordered state is attacked by an aggressive tyrannical power (as for example America by Japan in 1941), it is the duty of the state to defend its people. If there were an effective international law governing all nation-states, it would be another problem. The fact remains today, however, that there is no effective international law. Therefore, defense of its peoples is a basic condition of existence. And as one theologian has pointed out, "To deny, on ethical grounds, this elementary right of the State to defend itself by war simply means to deny the existence of the State itself."* This has been a consistent Christian viewpoint shared by the majority of Christians for centuries. However, this answer has its limitations. Obviously it can be applied to a fairly clear-cut case of aggression. In modern times the difficulty of defining who in the long run is really responsible for aggression becomes increasingly difficult. Therefore, this particular answer should be applied with increasing care.

Let us then summarize this section. Christianity says that wars are caused by the accumulation of a lot of little conflicts. Therefore, people in all countries are responsible for war, not just a

*Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative,* p. 469.

few leaders. However, there are varying degrees of right and wrong. Thus, when a conflict arises, it is the duty of the Christian to decide which side represents the most good, holds out the greatest possibilities for a right way of life. Then he will join that side and contend against the other. Whether he will be a pacifist or a nonpacifist is up to the individual person. Whichever rôle he chooses will have a mixture of good and evil in it, even as is the conflict itself. Finally, the Christian knows that war does not solve the problems which generated the conflict. It does not create anything. War is a negative necessity. It frees enslaved peoples, it destroys a relatively evil way of life, it maintains the conditions which at least open the door to new progress. Had the Nazis won, that door would have been closed. The door has been kept open. But we have yet to go through the door and there is much building yet to be done in constructing the house of peace.

This leads to a consideration of the foundations for the house of peace. We have mentioned the problem of conflicts—economic, political, social, ideological, etc. But behind all these problems is the major one of nationalism and sovereignty. Nationalism may be defined as the policy which makes one nation a law unto itself. That is, any given nation makes its own laws for its own people. As a nation it tends towards self-sufficiency. It does not consider itself subject to the laws of any other nation. Sovereignty is the doctrine that a nation has the right to maintain nationalism, to maintain its own use of power. One nation asserts that it is sovereign sufficient unto itself, determined to find its destiny without interference from other nations. This does not necessarily mean isolationism. For contact and agreements with other nations are made frequently. But the basis of any such agreement and relationship is mutual advantage. If no advantage to a nation is seen, there is no agreement, only conflict. Nationalism, then, is a gigantic form of collective self-interest. It is the attempt for a given people to be self-sufficient and a law unto themselves. It

is inevitable, therefore, that nations should conflict, particularly in modern times. Economic factors alone inevitably involve us in relationship with other nations. Accompanying economic problems are political considerations. Too much power in one nation begets fear and suspicion in nations with less power. Temptations for powerful nations to impose their demands on lesser powers are great. For example: America needs oil. So do England and Russia. Iran, a tiny nation, has the oil. Pressure is applied on Iran to grant concessions. There are rivalry and conflict not only between the big powers and Iran, but also between the large nations. Who shall determine which nation is right or wrong? There is no international authority or laws. Each nation desperately insists that no one shall dictate to it. Each insists that its sovereignty be maintained. Thus, today we have international anarchy. The United Nations, like the League of Nations, is a beginning and an attempt along with the Nuremberg war trials to establish international law. But this will never be done until all nations face the problem of nationalism and sovereignty squarely. From the Christian viewpoint, nationalism and sovereignty are wrong and destructive because they are collective forms of sin—selfishness. It is obvious that if every individual went around a complete law unto himself, life would be a violent and destructive anarchy. Every man could do what he wanted to and there would be no authority or law which could restrain him or tell him he was wrong. It would be the life of dog-eat-dog. Because of this obvious truth, we all submit to and willingly create social laws, establish some order and authority which make life possible. It should be equally obvious to us now that individual nations have too long been laws unto themselves and it has been a dog-eat-dog affair in the world society. We live in a state of world anarchy where the only arbiters of conflict between nations are force, violence and power.

Christianity condemns this situation as wrong and destructive for these reasons: No nation is God; no group of people are wise

and good enough to be self-sufficient laws unto themselves. No nation has the right to rule over other nations, to set itself up as the judge of right and wrong. Nations are collections of human beings and as such are bodies of good and evil, selfishness and virtue, wisdom and ignorance. Collections of people are under the same moral and spiritual laws as individuals. Nations are subject to laws of right and wrong as well as its individuals. No nation or group of nations can say that they are God—the determiners of destiny, the final answers to all the problems of life. Nations come and go, rise and fall, but life with its purposes, meanings, creative abilities, right and wrong remains. "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket. All the nations before Him (God) are as nothing and they are counted to Him less than nothing and vanity" (Isaiah 40:15, 17). Nationalism is therefore a colossal expression of collective sin, the pride of man at its height. And as such it can only seek its own interests. These interests clash with other nations seeking their interests. There is no authority to adjudicate these conflicts. Therefore, they mount up until the issue is settled not by what is right and wrong, but by who is the most powerful. With new atomic weapons future wars will result in the destruction of both contestants. Only a remnant in either country will survive. And it is not at all inconceivable that if many more wars occur Western civilization, at least, will be destroyed. The tragedy of this disaster would lie in the fact that such a war would probably be fought in the name of saving Western civilization. We would destroy the very thing we thought to save. This is the tragedy of nationalism. It seeks to save itself—its country. But its sovereignty is precisely the thing which leads to conflict and its destruction. This is Christ's truth applied with piercing poignancy to international relations. "Whosoever would save his life will lose it" (Luke 9:24).

Christianity has always asserted the essential equality of all men before God. This means that no people have the right to

rule over others. Christianity has also asserted the dependency of man on God. This means that no nation has the right to play God—therefore, it cannot be self-sufficient and a law unto itself. This is one world—it is God's world, not America's, nor Russia's, nor the United Nations'. It should be clear, therefore, that we will not solve the problem of war and peace so long as we retain our sovereignty and nationalisms. This expression of collective sin must be broken. And it will be a close race between overcoming our sin and the wages of our sin—death.

At the same time, Christianity knows that because we must abandon nationalism, it does not follow that we will do it easily. Human pride and sin are stubborn. That is why it will be a close race between our reform and our destruction. It is also ironic that the Christian Church exhibits a form of religious nationalism. It is clearly evident that the divisions and disunity of Christendom are a scandal and an expression of collective sin and pride. It is also clear that Christianity stands for the unity of Christendom. Christianity stands in severe judgment upon the Churches. It is ironic, therefore, that we Christians preach the absolute necessity of a world society and government when we cannot even unite ourselves. This fact should prevent us from a self-righteous condemnation of nations which refuse to unite. It should destroy any optimism about how easy it is to give up sovereignty "if only people were educated and would try hard enough." The problem of unity—in Christendom or among nation states—is the problem of collective sin and pride. So all of us—Christians and nations alike—stand under the judgment of God, the Lord of history. We all stand convicted of self-interest and sin, of assuming we are laws unto ourselves. Now because we have new and terrifying means of technical destruction, the urgency of recognizing our sin and repenting and changing becomes most extreme. The ideal of international government and universal church is not new. As an ethical ideal it has been present in Christianity and Western civilization a long time.

What we need now is power to work towards that ideal. This is the religious problem of conversion, of overcoming individual and collective sin enough to approximate what we ought to achieve. There are many encouraging signs. The mergers of many religious denominations, the formation of the United Nations, the increasing awareness of this destructive power of sovereignty and nationalism, the fear of atomic power urging us to reduce conflicts by co-operation and submission to international authority, etc. But we have a long way to go and time is short. The biblical exhortation "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mat. 4:17) has an intense urgency and meaning to modern man.

2

ECONOMICS

THE very idea that Christianity has anything to say about economics bothers a lot of people. These people believe that Christianity knows nothing about economics and that it should stay out of it. The feeling is that religion is spiritual and economics is practical and that the two should not be combined. This is another way of saying that religion has nothing to do with the practical necessities of life, that it is purely spiritual—something to be enjoyed on Sunday, but forgotten the rest of the week. And this is what has happened in our modern life. The familiar criticism that religion is impractical and does not concern itself with the basic stuff of life is partly justified. Yet the responsibility for this failure lies not only in the church, but also with the people, the very people who make this criticism. The situation is like this: people criticize the church because it does not take an active rôle in the business of life—in economics, politics, labor, business, etc. Yet whenever a minister delivers a sermon on, say, "The Christian's responsibility in economics" (or politics, etc.) almost everyone tells him that he is off his base. "Give us something spiritual, Reverend," "For heaven's sake, keep religion out of economics and politics!" To be sure, there have been some poor addresses on these topics, but that does not mean that therefore religion should never mention the subject. We may put it this way: If religion has nothing to say or to do about economics and politics, then it has nothing to say about anything. Christianity says that religion is the

very core and center of life, or it is nothing. If religion is only a sideline, a pleasant luxury, it is of no worth. For this reason, it is high time that Christian folk realize their responsibilities in this line and put them into practice.

Christianity is concerned about economics because economics affects people and the way they live. Thus, if a particular economic system results in denying people a chance to work, or prevents them from obtaining a sufficient standard of living, it is the duty of the Christian to criticize that system and point to the needs of the people. Religion is the critic of society and all social systems. But there are limits to our criticism and our activity in economics. The minister or church can never say that this particular economic measure, such as a particular tax bill, or tariff law, or crop control, is all wrong or all right. Nor can a minister think up some other bill and say that it is the final and perfect solution and it is God's will that all Christians should vote for it. No Christian can do that for the simple reason that he is not God; he does not know all the answers, he is not an economic expert, and a policy devised by a human being is never perfect and absolutely right. Therefore, a minister or a church can never tell a person how to vote on any particular economic measure. And it is not the business of a church to dictate to people on how they should vote. But this does not mean that Christianity has nothing to say about economics. Quite the contrary.

Because of our basic ethical principle of love, what happens to people is very definitely our concern and responsibility. Therefore, if people are hungry, unemployed, victims of economic injustice, then it is our responsibility to protest and to work for their betterment. This means dealing in economics. But how? As an example, let us take our own country and our own economic system. Our particular economic system is called "capitalism." Many people add the adjectives "free enterprise," "competitive," or "industrial" capitalism. These words distinguish

it from other systems such as socialism, communism, or the other phases of capitalism such as "frontier capitalism" and "laissez-faire capitalism"—phases through which our present system developed. At any rate, we now have an economic system which is generally described as capitalism and is distinct from other systems in other countries.

It is obvious that our system has worked very well. It has contributed much towards making us the most powerful nation in the world; it has given us the highest standard of living. In the war, it outproduced the world and was one of the chief factors in winning the war. It has given us many benefits such as schools, hospitals, public buildings, and displays of art, music, and culture of all kinds. It is one of the major feats of economic history. For this reason, many people believe that capitalism is the final answer to economic problems and that if only other countries would follow suit, all would be well. In addition, many people equate capitalism with democracy, and not a few go on to say that capitalism is the Christian economic system. Therefore, if other people criticize or are against capitalism, they are called "undemocratic, un-Christian, un-American." This is a very serious error. No matter how good capitalism is, it can never be identified with democracy, much less with Christianity. This does not mean that capitalism is necessarily un-Christian. The point is that capitalism is a man-made economic system. And since it is man-made it is not perfect; it has good and bad in it. It is the responsibility of Christianity to discern where capitalism is good and support it, and also to see where it is bad and oppose it and work for its improvement. This means that a Christian can never be one who feels that capitalism or any other economic system is perfect and therefore must be preserved at all costs. Such thinking is termed as "reactionary." This attitude is very dangerous. It is dangerous because it presumes that it is perfect and therefore anybody who disagrees is wrong and "subversive." It is dangerous because it imagines that you can stop the clock

of history. It regards all opposition as a regression, a going-back in history rather than a sign of going ahead to new progress in history. It believes that history can be stopped and things preserved as they are. Of course, these people admit some changes should be made, a little tinkering here and there is necessary, but essentially they believe the system as such is the best in the world and should therefore be retained as it is. This attitude fails to see that life and history are dynamic; there is no stopping along the road of time and saying "we like this, let's stop and enjoy and secure this place." The fact of the matter is that not everyone wants to stop there, not everyone enjoys "this place." Therefore, they protest and want to change, to travel farther. These are the people who are hungry, insecure, unemployed, and who eke out a bare existence. To call them "radical" and "subversive" and wrong is gross self-righteousness and callousness. The very fact that opposition and criticism abound is proof that a system is not perfect.

Thus, from our Christian viewpoint we learn three facts: First, no economic system is ever perfect. It is man-made and developed and therefore contains good and evil in it. Since life and history are dynamic, all economic systems must be adapted constantly, changed frequently to meet new needs and new problems. A Christian may be a conservative who believes these changes must be made slowly and with great care, but he can never be a reactionary who opposes all changes. A Christian can be a radical who believes in wide-sweeping and rapid changes, but he cannot be a radical who believes the one system is all wrong and another system all right—"the only hope of the world." It may well be that capitalism as an economic system will die out one way or another. This does not frighten the Christian. For he knows that no economic system devised by man has lasted to eternity and never will. Therefore, it is quite probable that capitalism will either collapse as it has in Europe, or it will gradually develop into something else—as it seems to be doing in

England and America. What is important is that people and their way of life be made better.

Secondly, the Christian will never identify a particular economic system with either the devil or God. The capitalist is wrong when he identifies capitalism with democracy and Christianity. The fact is that both democracy and Christianity can exist with or without capitalism. The socialist or communist is also wrong if he makes that identification. The capitalist is wrong if he asserts that capitalism is the only possible answer to life's economic problems. The socialist and communist, or monarchist, or fascist, or anyone else is wrong if he asserts that only his system is the answer. It is also wrong for any liberal or radical to believe that the sole cause or evil of our times is the established system of the day. This is the grave error of Marxism. It assumes that all evils are due to capitalism. Abolish capitalism and all evils will disappear. This is the grave error of much liberal thought in America. Liberals tend to believe that Wall Street and business corporations are the source of all evil. Abolish them and the common man will have a chance and all will be well. Christianity agrees that there may be evil in these things, but asserts that not only is there some good in them, but more important, that evil lies not so much in any one system but in people—all people. Therefore, no matter what system you will have, no matter who runs it, there will be evil and injustice along with the good. The radical of today is the conservative of tomorrow. If people really understood this truth, they would not indulge in hysterical and frantic attacks upon each other. The conservative is not a big bad bogey man in league with devilish men who want to enslave people, nor is the radical a long-haired scatter-brain ready to set the world on fire. Both sides may be wrong, but never totally wrong. To imagine that you are totally right and your opponent totally wrong is to engage in fanaticism and violence which will destroy the very thing you seek to gain. A desperate and fanatical resistance to all change will produce

a more violent and destructive change than was ever feared or imagined. Similarly, a violent and self-righteous radical reform will result in a new and more terrible form of inequality, tyranny and oppression. There are certain times in history, when violent revolt is necessary. But if a revolt or a violent reform includes the attitude that its program is perfect, it will result in a new tyranny which itself should be challenged. In short, destructive economic conflicts in history result from one or both sides imagining that they are more right and good than they really are, and then, having established themselves, resisting improvement. So much for the general analysis of economics.

Let us examine the Christian's action in specific economic problems. What will the Christian do about such a policy as a tax bill or a corporation-control measure or a farm-subsidy act? Obviously, his first task is to obtain and understand as much about the problem as possible. Some people will know a lot about it, others will know little, depending on their general knowledge of economics. The Christian may or may not be an expert. But whether he is or not, it is his responsibility to know and understand as many facts as he can. His next job is to determine whether this particular measure will benefit a large number of people without harming other people. In other words, will it do justice to the legitimate and necessary needs of one group of people without working an injustice to other groups of people? He must also consider whether this particular measure will bring immediate advantage but perhaps result in ultimate disadvantage. It does no good to give a person medicine which will make him feel well for a few days, but which will later make him deathly sick. In short, the Christian has a criterion or standard for making these judgments. That standard is love and justice towards all people. In concrete terms it means providing and creating situations in which people have a better chance to help themselves attain some security, happiness, creativity and responsibility. Will this and that economic measure help or hinder

that situation? This is the Christian approach to such a problem.

However, many difficulties arise. In the first place, few of us are economic experts and so it is very probable that our judgments will be neither wholly right, nor wholly wrong. But we can never be certain that we are absolutely right. Yet we must make a decision and vote one way or another. For this reason, it should be obvious that one must respect the sincerity and integrity of those who vote in opposition to us. Mud-slinging and name-calling are quite out of order here. Thus, it is not only possible, but well-nigh inevitable that any two Christians may well vote differently. And neither has the right to say that the other is more or less Christian because he voted differently. Secondly, in actual life, no particular economic policy or measure will ever come up to Christian standards. These are man-made answers and none of us can possibly foresee all the problems and devise the perfect solution. That does not mean that therefore the Christian cannot vote. If he waits for the perfect solution he will never vote or act at all. The real situation is that the Christian has to decide between two or three imperfect measures. The real question is: "Which measure most nearly approximates the ideal?" He will then decide and vote for the best policy. Thirdly, once having voted and acted upon a measure, the Christian knows that his work is only just beginning. Since the particular measure is, by definition, not perfect, the responsible person must be ready to change and modify it, to improve it, and later perhaps, to find another new policy altogether if need be. Such is his course of action.

It should be clear by now why there can be no Christian blueprint for economic problems, and yet why Christianity is so relevant to economic problems. Christianity has a blueprint in one sense. It stands for very incisive yet broad ideals and goals towards which we must strive if we are to survive. It says that every person has an equal right to a productive and creative life, an equal right to work, to create, to a standard of living, to

privacy, to progress. Since all men are children of God, they have these rights. God plays no favorites and let no man or group of men think that they have some special claim to happiness, security, wealth, at the expense of others. The ideal is that all men equally everywhere are entitled to live, to eat, to work, to serve God as they see fit. Economics is the science of helping men attain the material benefits and necessities which make part of this ideal attainable. Therefore, when a Christian sees a general economic trend that indicates benefit only to a few at the expense of the many, he takes part in economics. He fights and works hard against that trend and works equally hard to find a better measure. The Christian does and must participate in economics. This is as much a part of life as anything else. Not to participate is to ignore an obvious responsibility.

On the other hand, in our zeal to participate in economics, we must not make the fatal mistake of identifying a particular measure with Christianity. We never can say that "all Christians must vote against this policy. Not to do so is to betray Christ." In this sense, Christianity has no blueprint for economics. What, then, is the answer? The answer is this: Christianity has a definite set of ideals and goals—such as described above—towards which mankind must go if it is to survive. These standards are the yardsticks not only of economics, but also politics, social problems, etc. All Christians are united on these goals or standards. And all Christians have the responsibility of doing their utmost in working towards these goals. Therefore, the Christian must take action in economics as well as the rest of life. But just how he acts and how he votes can never be and ought never to be dictated or blueprinted. This is because none of us has enough knowledge or goodness to understand all the complexities of economics, or foresee all the possible contingencies that will arise, or completely overcome our own self-interest in economic problems. For this reason, it becomes a Christian to dis-

play resolute action but also tolerance, respect for others, and a readiness to change.

Someone may ask, at this point, "then what real good or hope does Christianity offer?" It offers these things: First, it attacks and helps destroy the reactionary attitude. Christianity is never satisfied with things as they are. No matter how good we are, no matter how much we have achieved, in the eyes of God it is not good enough, there is still work to be done, progress to be made in helping people achieve a better life. Only a madman would think that our present world is perfect. Secondly, Christianity attacks and restrains radical utopian movements. It reminds these movements that while they have much good in them and much justice due to them, nevertheless, they are all too human and their program is not the perfect one, that their enemies are not the sole cause of their plight, that the means do not justify the ends, that tolerance and humility become them, too. Thirdly, Christianity provides us with the ideals and standards by which we can tell whether we are going backwards or forwards. And even if we do not reach the ideal, it does not mean that all our efforts are useless. Put it this way—as someone once said, "Ideals are like stars. Though we do not reach them they guide us on our course." That is true. Without them we wouldn't know good from bad, progress from regress. But with them, like the navigator, we can set a course, travel it, and reach the other shore safely. Fourthly, Christianity tends to reduce economic conflict. It does not eliminate conflict; it reduces violent and destructive conflict. For most economic conflict arises from extremists on both sides of an argument. Both extremists believe they are absolutely right and the other absolutely wrong; they, therefore, tend to "liquidate," use violence in support of their policy or system. The Christian cannot do this because he knows that neither has the right to such an absolute claim. Conflicts also arise because of self-interest and this self-

interest prevents us from being objective and tolerant. Christianity points out the self-interest involved in every economic policy and individual vote and also tends to reduce and curb that self-interest, that type of sin. We know all too well that most of us vote on economic bills primarily from the standpoint of how it will help me and my business rather than whether it is good for the majority of people. And we are familiar with all our clever rationalizations which try to hide such selfishness. This is what Christianity attacks and helps solve. Lastly, Christianity has no illusions about solving life's problems—let alone the economic ones—in a few years. It denies even that possibility. It is quite realistic. But what a difference Christianity can make! Instead of hysterical ravings between capitalist and communist, conservative and liberal, we could have a tolerant conflict with much more productive results. Instead of name-calling, violence, hasty and ill-considered measures, we could have better understanding and more mutually advantageous measures and methods of change. When strikes are the only means of getting a hearing it shows that we have not had the tolerance to create other less harmful methods of effective arbitration of disputes. Instead of everyone voting from the motive, "What's in it for me?," we could vote more from the motive, "What's in it for everybody?" Even if a relatively small number of people did these things that Christianity teaches, it would make a powerful and noticeable difference. For proof of that, all one has to do is to go to a country where Christianity has not affected its culture at all, or where it has consciously repudiated Christianity (*e.g.*, Nazi Germany, Communist China). Only a dreamy utopian perfectionist could fail to see the difference such Christian attitudes would make instead of our present selfish, desperate, dog-eat-dog attitudes.

Christianity, then, is intensely concerned about economics and believes it the responsibility of all Christians to participate actively in economics. Our religion holds high the ideals towards

which we all must aspire, quickens the conscience and the will to action, but it does not dictate to individuals or to the economic experts what their specific vote or deed must be. Our hope is that some number of Christians will become economic experts so that expert detailed knowledge may be combined with the broad moral insights and ideals of Christianity. But meanwhile, all of us are bound to act responsibly, resolutely and with tolerance, and with unselfishness and perhaps sacrifice if need be, in the whole realm of economics.

3

POLITICS

CHRISTIANITY'S relation to politics is very similar to its action in economics. Again it must be said that, like economics, too little attention by church folk has been paid to politics. If religion is one thing and practical politics something else and "keep religion out of politics" is the slogan, then perhaps one reason why politics is such a mess is precisely because people have kept religion and morals out of politics. Politics, like economics, is a very important part of life, and if religion has nothing to do with politics and if we purposely keep all religious insights and moral ideals out of politics, then we are doomed to continual political conflict and destruction. To all who say "keep religion out of politics," we must reply: "Very well, then do not complain when politics seems to be filled with selfish, narrow bickerings and clashes of power-seeking pressure groups. What else could you expect if you divest politics of all religious motivation and restraint?" On the other hand, part of the cry about keeping religion out of politics is justified. And actually what is meant is "keep the church out of politics." Sometimes particular churches have made the serious mistake of telling their people how to vote on a specific issue. They have no right to do this. Nor has the church any right to act as a headquarters or propaganda unit for any political party. When and if the church does such things as that, it is wrong and should rightly be criticized. But though the church has no right to dictate our political votes or act as the agent of a

political party, this does not mean that therefore it has nothing to do with politics. What, then, are its concern and relation to politics?

Like its relation to economics, Christianity's job is to criticize the state and all its political parties. Its job is to set forth the ideals of life—love and justice, and to criticize all political parties and platforms from those standards. This means that instead of telling people whether to vote Democratic or Republican, it illumines the various issues and problems and policies of all parties, pointing out the good and the bad in broad terms, calling attention to the factors of self-interest in each party and in each of us persons, pricking our consciences and impelling us to responsible action. Then each individual is free to vote as he sees fit. Here again, Christianity at once begins by asserting that no party or platform is perfect. There are good and bad on both sides; all fall short of the ideal. Therefore, the issue is between imperfect parties and policies. Since this is so, mud-slinging and hysterical name-calling of opponents is absolutely wrong. The cheap, dirty, fanatical remarks that appear in our political campaigns reveal a profound and neurotic insecurity and fear (or plain cynicism) in the characters who say those things. The oft-times heated and bitter political debates between friends similarly reveal in their personalities a deep-seated anxiety and insecurity and self-righteousness. This very anxiety is proof that, unconsciously at least, they are aware that their own political beliefs and policies are far from perfect and need revision. But even deeper than that is the problem of self-interest. Political conflicts, like all other conflicts in life, are so intense and frequent because of self-interest. Everybody is out for himself but always rationalizes his selfishness in altruistic terms. Consciously we vote for a political party because we believe "it is for the good of the country." But unconsciously the chances are that our real motive is "it's good for me." Thus, we are bitter towards our opponents because we believe that if they win we may lose money or power

or prestige. The last thing we can do is to admit that we are wrong and be ready to sacrifice or change. The first and easiest thing we can do is to tell our opponent that he is wrong and that he must change. And of course, he does the same thing towards us. Therefore, it is very difficult to be "objective" about politics. To be sure, we can be objective over some such measure as to whether the New Mexico Indians should be given the right to publish their own newspaper or not. Such an issue does not affect us, so we can debate it rationally and easily. But very few of us can be objective over an issue on whether a government bureau shall have the right to determine our margin of profit. That hits us right in the familiar pocket book. If Jones is an employer, he will fight against that bill to the last ditch because it means he will lose money. If Smith is one of his employees, he will fight for the bill because it means more money for him. Both men will have great self-interest involved and both will try to rationalize this selfishness and pretend that the bill is good for everybody including the opponent! To say that both can be quite rational and objective about such a problem is naïve.

Therefore, Christianity sees the complexity of political problems and is realistic enough to point out that no person or party can ever claim that it is absolutely right and perfect. Therefore, by definition, blind allegiance to any one party is dangerous idolatry and leads to bitter and destructive conflicts. The source of evil in any given country is *not* in any one party or program; it is in people in all parties and policies. The popular and frequent belief that, if only we could get rid of that man and that party all would be well, is a childish and pathetic illusion which springs from an almost total ignorance of human nature. Many men and many parties have been defeated, but we still have our difficult political problems.

What then is the course of action for a Christian? It is the same as in economics. Politics is our responsibility. It is our job to keep informed, know the facts, the situations and the prob-

lems, the policies and programs and personalities involved. Then, from our Christian standards, we must determine which one comes nearest to those standards. Then we work for that policy and vote for it. If it wins, we do not sit back contentedly, for we know it is not perfect. It needs constant change, adaptation and improvement. If our party or policy loses, we accept defeat graciously and at once work to support what is good in that party, oppose what is wrong and continue to work for improvements. In short, we do the same thing no matter who wins. The issue and essential point is not so much which party wins, but that we take responsible action in working for good measures and opposing bad measures regardless of which party proposes or represents them. Right and wrong are bigger than any party or personality. Our allegiance and work is for God and His purposes. That is our course of action—always.

Christianity, then, is directly concerned with politics. It believes and affirms that the principle of love must be the guiding standard in politics or else we are all lost—blind leading the blind in the endless maze of self-interest. Our religion offers the power to curb this self-interest and tends to make us more objective. It offers insights into political problems and reminds us that the goal of politics is the betterment of people. Not just some few people. Our faith does not make us political puppets by telling us how to vote. It gives us standards of judgment, quickens our conscience and will to action, gives us tolerance and humility and thereby keeps us from neurotic bitterness and hysteria. And finally, it attacks that cynical despair which takes no action in politics because "it's so dirty, what's the use?" Christianity knows that no man can participate in life without getting his hands dirty, but not to participate is to stagnate and die. Politics will get worse if we do not take part in it. Indeed, it is our fault that it is so bad—for who elected people? We have no one to blame but ourselves. Politics is not more evil than we; it is a perfect mirror and reflection of all of us and the way we live.

The good politician is the mirror of the good in us; the bad politician is a reflection of our evil. The despairing attitude which throws the stone at "politics" hits us all squarely in the heart. Here, as in economics, our Christian religion requires us all to participate in politics and hopes that not a few Christian men will enter politics and become political experts so that religion may be brought into politics more effectively.

4

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

FEW people can say today that the church ignores social problems, but many can say that it does not deal with them realistically. We are all familiar with church people who used to express great concern over the British treatment of Palestine, the plight of the poor in Europe, but who now lash out against the Jews in their own neighborhood and treat their servants or shopkeepers as if they were inferior animals. Of course, this is true not only of church people, but of the majority of people. It is always easy to be charitable to some faraway cause, and very difficult to practice it right in your own neighborhood. It is so easy for a northerner to criticize a southerner about the Negro problem, but so difficult for the northerner to act fairly towards the Jews. People, then, are interested and concerned about social problems, but we need to examine their actions and their motives. Christianity is very much concerned with social problems because it is an obvious expression of love of neighbor. Let us examine a few social problems to see what Christianity has to offer us in this part of life.

A. *Labor*

It is not an exaggeration to say that in urban areas the Protestant Church has been washed up on the banks of the middle and upper classes. The rank and file of labor are not members of the Protestant Church. This is not to say that labor is atheistic. It is merely to point out that the appeal, the support and

the congregations of our churches consist largely of the middle and upper strata of our society. For this reason, it is not surprising that the church's attitude towards labor might justifiably be called conservative. Or, to put it more accurately, the majority of church people are conservative and suspicious in their attitude towards labor. Of course, there are many exceptions and the church itself and our Christian religion severely challenges our middle-class complacency, and hypocrisy. That we are complacent and proud and self-satisfied is proved very easily by the indignation and storm that is raised whenever a minister preaches a sermon on the labor situation. The protest he receives reveals a guilty conscience on the part of the congregation. But congregations are not alone guilty; so are many ministers. In short, the time has come when our church must live up to its religion by ministering to all people, not to just some people. The labor problem affords us an excellent chance not only for new service but a very pressing and practical example of Christianity at work on a social problem.

Here in the labor problem, the Christian approach is the same as in political and economic problems. Right at the start, our religion knows that labor is neither a group of "subversive radicals" nor "saints who are the only hope of the world." It also knows that capital and employer are neither fiendish tyrants nor "the only practical men who can save this country." Here again it is the old familiar story—neither capital nor labor is all right or all wrong. It is fatuous and the height of pride for either group to presume that the other is wrong, and that, therefore, it is *they* who must give in totally to our demands. The hotheads and extremists on both sides are wrong and only increase the conflict and hinder the solution. But even if there were no extremists, the problem is most complex and there is no easy answer. Here again, it is the responsibility of the Christian to find out all the facts of the situation. And it is necessary to emphasize that this in itself is not an easy task. For most of the

usual sources of information—the press and radio—do not give an adequate picture of the situation. For example, a strike occurs. The majority of newspapers will simply say that the cause of the strike is labor's demand for a two-dollar-per-day increase in wages. Period. But that is a very poor and inadequate piece of news-reporting. It does not tell us what that means or other factors involved. For example, it leaves unanswered such basic questions as, "Why does labor think that two dollars more per day is essential?" "What are they being paid now?" "Is this sufficient to live on?" "Do they work all the year around, or, as in some coal industries, do they work only eight months out of a year?" "Is this demand not so much a request for more money, but a means of obtaining more voice in the affairs of the company?" etc. In short, one cannot begin to understand the problem, much less make a fair decision purely on the basis of one little superficial fact. The same holds true about capital's side of the question. In most liberal papers that side with labor, the refusal of capital to accede to labor's demand is reported as due to President X's "intransigeance" or "reactionary policies," and this is usually accompanied by a statement stressing the large profits made by the company last year. This meager fact fails to answer these basic questions, "Why does the company feel that it cannot afford to grant the two-dollar increase?" "What are its production and labor costs, taxes, and competitors' prices?" "Do they expect as much volume of sales as last year?" "Could they afford a one-dollar increase?" "Is their production hampered by the uncertainty of both labor and the market?" etc., etc. These questions must be answered, too. The trouble is that most of us simply read the headlines about a strike, stop right there and begin to mutter something about "There goes labor again—bunch of greedy, dangerous radicals." We do not read about capital going on sit-down strikes, clever delays in production, subtle division of profits to interlocking directorates. These are not reported in most papers. On the other hand, if we look

at another set of papers, we will read their headlines about a refusal to meet a labor demand, and we mutter something about "those Wall Street capitalists—just a bunch of greedy profit-seekers." And so it goes. We must be careful of our sources of information and must take extra efforts to get all the facts about both sides of the situation. When this is done, we make a judgment on the problem from the light of our Christian standards. But in so doing, several things must be borne in mind.

First, if we are a member of labor or are already in sympathy with it, we must be aware of the fact that therefore we shall tend to be prejudiced in advance against capital. And because our own livelihood depends upon our labor, we shall tend to vote from self-interest, to imagine we are more right than we really are. The same is equally true if we are on the side of capital. Because we of the middle and upper classes are relatively secure, we tend to be conservative and to resist change. We already are prejudiced in advance, and self-interest is strong because we regard labor as a threat to our country. Therefore, we intend to imagine that we are more right than we really are. Elementary honesty should help force us to be aware of our entrenched prejudice and self-interest. Thus, when making a judgment we must account for this.

Secondly, we must remember that the whole problem of labor and capital goes far deeper than mere wages. Here Christianity and the science of economics offer us insight into the deeper issues. These issues are: Is labor to be regarded as merely property, a means to production, or is it to be regarded as a collection of human beings who have certain rights and responsibilities? Should not labor have some right to determine the policies of their company in so far as it affects their living standards and should they not have some voice in decisions of the company, or is labor to be satisfied with merely material benefits? Are business and industry solely the responsibility of its executives or should they be a more co-operative enterprise? Has labor the right

to demand things of capital which it is not willing to accept for itself (for example, one union recently refused to make public its books, but demanded that the company make its books public)? Can business be run efficiently if labor has a voice in determining policy? Has either capital or labor the justification for expecting absolute certainty of protection against unemployment or profit loss? These and other related questions are really the basic questions for they deal with the human side of the problem. Intelligent decisions cannot be made until one has wrestled with these problems. And Christianity, far from being reactionary, is quite radical in its answers to some of these questions. For example, Christianity holds that labor can never be regarded as property or solely the means of production. Labor is people—human beings—who have a right to live and a right to have a voice in the affairs of life. Christianity flatly rejects the attitude which throws a few more dollars to laborers in the hope of satisfying them and keeping them quiet. This shows utter disregard for human beings. Christianity also believes that it is not enough merely to give labor certain benefits. This is pure materialism. What people need are responsibility and power to play a part in the ordering of their lives. Too long has labor been treated as property and as cattle; too long has it been denied any voice in the very character of its existence. Until very recently in history, a laborer was at the mercy of his employer's whims and fancies. It is little wonder, then, at long last, that working people should assert themselves and ask for more share not only in the material things in life, but in the actual ordering and living of life. The sins of capital in years past have now produced their disastrous results.

On the other hand, the sins of labor are not a few either. Because laborers have been the victims of obvious injustice over a long period of time, they often imagine themselves to be more right than they really are, and capitalists as more evil than they really are. All new movements in history tend to go to extremes

—whether it be a labor movement, a scientific theory, an artistic school, or an economic tendency. Extremism is one of the products of birth pains as well as self-righteousness. One should not be surprised, therefore, at extremists in new movements. When capitalism was born, it had its robber barons, crooks, and racketeers. This does not mean we tolerate such actions; it only means that we are not surprised and do not condemn the whole movement because of a few irresponsible men. At present, labor like capital commits grievous sins. Not all unions can claim true democracy in them. Not all labor leaders can say they treat their employers as human beings nor even their fellow workers. The majority of capitalists today are aware of the evils of their forefathers and are eager to improve the lot of their workers. It is only natural and right that there should be honest differences of opinion between them and labor leaders as to how to effect these changes. To accuse them of insincerity and fraud is quite wrong. Many companies have made remarkable achievements in labor-capital relations. Unfortunately, like happy and successful marriages, these do not make the headlines.

Here again on the labor problem, Christianity offers us much help. It gives us the long-range historical view as well as the deep and profound issues behind the immediate situations. It reminds us again of the ever-present factor of sin—of self-interest that is in all of us and which makes the problem so difficult. But at the same time, Christianity offers us the power to restrain this self-interest, to put on "the new man" who can act more objectively. It also offers us the standards and insights by which we can make more discerning judgments and take more resolute and intelligent action. And lastly, as always, it spurs us on to new changes and constant improvements. No Christian, if he is to lay any claim to the name, can ever be complacent and satisfied with things as they are.

The world of tomorrow, whether we like it or not, will be governed by working people—the so-called "common man." We

are all common men, but not all laborers. To view with alarm this prospect betrays a vicious hypocrisy and self-righteousness. Non-laborers have governed the world for centuries and only an insane person could take pride in the achievement. There has been much good produced—also much evil. Tomorrow, the working people will have their chance; indeed, it is already beginning. This does not mean that they will do any better or any worse, for they are no better nor worse than the other people. Nor does this mean that our responsibilities have ceased. Quite the contrary, it means that we have taken on some new partners whether we want to or not. Our responsibilities for the governing of life are now broader and subject to more criticism and more help. This is as it should be, for there is no one class or group of people wise enough or good enough to rule others or even themselves. The business of living is the business of everybody. How well we succeed from now on will depend on how well everybody regards everybody as human beings, as selfish yet noble, ignorant yet wise, children of God who must live according to His purposes or perish in the fire of their own making.

B. *Racial Problems*

With racial problems we come to a terribly complex and shameful chapter of our American scene. We have prided ourselves on the growth of democracy in our country. And yet racial strife has increased with startling rapidity, and extended over all corners of the land. This strife reveals the insecurity and fears of the American as well as showing up sins and weaknesses in character. No honest person is proud of our present racial antipathies. It is a blotch upon our country, our government, ourselves; but everybody admits this and yet the problem is still with us. So we had better get to work and do something about it.

Christianity is a severe challenge to all forms of racial hatred,

conflict and snobbery. The Christian doctrine that all men everywhere are children of God and therefore equal in that respect is a flat denial of any racial theory which asserts the supremacy of one race over another. There is absolutely nothing in the Bible which can be used as an argument for racial superiority. The theory that the Jews are a "Chosen Race," specially endowed with some virtue or quality unknown to other peoples, is a gross lie. And significantly enough, it is not the Jews who hold to this theory; it is the anti-semitic Gentiles who believe this nonsense. Any intelligent reading of the Bible will prove that what is meant by the phrase, "The Chosen People," is that the ancient Hebrew tribes believed that God had chosen them for a special mission in history. This mission was to suffer and work to bring other peoples into relation with God. This is the same idea that a present-day missionary shares. God has found him; life has taken on new meaning because of it. Therefore, he wants to share it with other people who are searching but have not found it. Or this same idea is present in a doctor who has discovered a new cure for some dread disease. He believes it is his duty, his mission to teach it to others, to help others to effect the cure. There is no idea present that the Hebrews, or the missionary, or the doctor, are more righteous than other people, or that there is some inborn superiority never before given to anyone else. Indeed, one has but to read anywhere in the Bible to find the long list of evils the Hebrews committed, evils which every people have committed before and since—as well as good deeds.

Christianity, then, is crystal clear on this point. All human beings everywhere and without exception have the equal right to live, to grow, to laugh, to work, to play. God has no favorites. Of course, people differ in abilities, but these differences are not confined to any race or nation. But we are all equal creatures in the business of living. We are all beings of good and bad, hopes and fears, laughter and tears, capable of hate and love.

Each person has a different combination of these factors, so that he is unique. Yet we are all alike in the sense that we are of worth in the eyes of God and man. No race has a monopoly on brains, virtue and reason. No race has cornered the market of evil, passion and destruction. All peoples have these things. This is the flat and clear Christian statement about the equality of all men.

In addition, we now have scientific corroboration of this fact. Biologists and anatomists have proven conclusively that no race or nation has any claim to superiority in intelligence, special abilities, or virtue or wisdom. The types of blood which flow through white men's veins are exactly the same as those which flow through the veins of brown, yellow, and black men. There is no evidence that Europeans have a special inborn instinct to fight that is not present in Americans or anybody else. There is no evidence that the Negroes have a special passionate sexual emotion, no evidence that Jews have a unique gift for "smart business." There is no "criminal race," no "totally irrational race," no "white supremacy" in any part of human nature. These are facts, asserted long ago by Christianity and proven indisputably by modern science. Whether we like it or not, those are the facts, they are the laws and structures of human nature, of life.

Having said these things, the common idealistic temptation is to run out and tell people these facts, educate them, and then, so the belief goes, racial problems will be solved. Would that it were as easy as that! Christianity is in favor of educating people and hammering these facts at them night and day. This must be done. But it is not enough. We must go much farther. And here our religion offers us some penetrating insights into human nature and ethical problems.

In the first place, we are dealing with prejudice when we deal with racial problems. And, as psychology ably points out, prejudice is not rational opinion nor can you overcome prejudice

with merely rational arguments. The happy illusion of the rationalist, that all problems can be solved by quiet objective and rational arbitration around a conference table, simply does not take into consideration the most elementary facts of human behavior. And one of these facts is that one cannot destroy a prejudice merely by rational discussion. The reason is obvious. Prejudice springs from a deep emotional insecurity. It is partly a learned process in that we "learn" it from our parents or our friends. But it is more an unconscious learning. That is, we are insecure or anxious; we are "frustrated" in some of our aggressive desires. The last person to blame is oneself. It is so much easier to let loose our emotions upon somebody else. Therefore, we project our own weaknesses upon some minority groups such as Negroes or Jews. If we have been having trouble in business, we accuse the Jews of being "clever, aggressive and tricky." This accusation shows our disappointment at not succeeding, or if succeeding, of our fear of failure. It also betrays our envy and jealousy at someone's else success. And further reveals that the weaknesses we detect in Jews are also our own weaknesses. By accusing them we achieve a kind of excuse and self-justification for our own similar weaknesses. Thus, prejudice is not just an opinion that somebody happens to have. It is a deep-seated emotional attitude. Therefore, all rational appeals and factual arguments will not change that attitude because the cause of it is an irrational factor. In short, the cause of a given prejudice may be anxiety about my business. Hating the Jews is an expression of that anxiety. Thus, if someone comes along and tells me and "proves" to me by scientific and religious argument that Jews do not have a special natural and biological business "sense," what good does that do to my anxiety? It does not help it at all. In fact, it may increase it because, even if I agree with him, then my case against the Jews is weakened. That makes me more anxious and therefore my prejudice will be more intense and more irrational.

Let us illustrate this irrational character of prejudice. Gentiles, one way or another, restrict the Jews. We try to keep them out of our neighborhoods, out of businesses, out of vacation spots, out of colleges. This forces the Jews into businesses of their own, neighborhoods of their own, colleges which do not have such restrictions. Then we turn around and flay the Jews for being so clannish. "Always together—you can bet on that," we say. "They dominate the movies, the garment industry—that's the trouble with Jews—they stick together too much." Logically, we Gentiles say this, in effect. "Keep the Jews out of here, keep them together, restrict them." Then we say "Look at those Jews—narrow and bigoted, just looking out for themselves." Thus, we want them restricted and when we succeed, we criticize them for obeying. With Negroes we do a similar thing. We say that Negroes are congenitally ignorant, passionate, and stupid—biologically inferior. But we protest against the education of Negroes because we are afraid that they might equal or surpass us in knowledge, intelligence, and rationality. Our prejudices, then, are logical contradictions because they are not logical attitudes, they are emotional. This is why racial conflicts are so bitter and violent and so difficult to solve.

What is the solution? There is no easy solution and no Christian blueprint. There are only Christian standards which we must apply in various ways. This Christian solution falls into two general areas: social and personal. In dealing with the social part we may state that the religious standard is the equality of all men before God. When we apply this criterion to this problem, several courses of action become apparent. For one thing, it is our duty to protect minorities from the prejudiced action of the majorities. It is, therefore, necessary to have laws which forbid lynchings and violence against any person or group of persons. And the state must be prepared to enforce those laws. No man has the right to murder another man. Lynching is murder and no rationalization can make it otherwise. Further than that, all

peoples are entitled to the opportunity to make a living. No group has the right to set itself up as judge and say that this and that person have no right to live. All men, regardless of race, creed, or color, have the right to economic, political and social living. Here again laws protecting the right must be had and enforced. The right to assume responsibilities in politics as in other areas of life must also be maintained. Of course, any state or nation has the right to make certain qualifications for voting, such as age, ability to read and write or understand. But no state has the right to refuse political responsibility because of race, color, financial status, etc. In addition, Christianity insists that no man be denied a job merely because of his race or religion. An employer has the right to refuse a man a job if that man is not qualified technically, mentally, or morally. But an employer has no right to refuse a man a job merely because that man is a Jew, Negro, Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist, etc. The state has the responsibility of preventing an employer from such discrimination. These, then, are some of the laws which Christianity insists are necessary and right.

However, it should at once be pointed out that these and similar laws do not solve the problem of race prejudice. They do not change anyone's prejudices. Nevertheless, such laws are necessary because they protect the victims of prejudiced action and provide at least a basis for their achieving a living. This is what can and must be done in the social area. The other area is the personal area and it is here that we deal directly in trying to eliminate race prejudice. A large percentage of prejudice is learned in the home. If the parents have race prejudice it is likely the children will have it too. It is necessary, therefore, that parents start with themselves. Too many parents lash out at people who have a prejudice against capitalists or Protestants. Yet these same parents have an equally violent prejudice against the Jews, or Catholics, or labor. "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone" (John 8:7). It is safe

to say that probably all of us have some kind of prejudice against somebody. Therefore, our starting point is with ourselves. Christianity insists that we begin in our own heart and ask some very pertinent and unpleasant questions. What are my prejudices? Where did I get them—from my parents, friends, teachers, papers, radio? Why do I have these prejudices? What are my anxieties and insecurities and disappointments which lead me to hate? What are my "clever" rationalizations and justifications of these prejudices? Do I use them to convince others or really to convince myself? These are the penetrating questions Christianity asks us. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me" (Psalm 139:23–24). And let no one think that such questions are easy or that we will be honest and courageous enough to really face the answers. Our temptation will be to dig just a little and then excuse and rationalize away what we find. A good rule to follow here is to assume that our prejudice is deeper and more intense than we believe it to be. And if one does attack his prejudice in this fashion, he will begin to cure it. For actually, one does not attack a prejudice directly. What one does in this method is discover the insecurity or condition of character from which the prejudice stems. Prejudice is a symptom, the danger signal of a defect in character and personality. When that defect is discovered and cured, the prejudice is cured—and not before. The only thing that will change an emotional prejudice is a healthy emotion, a change in character and personality.

Thus, racial problems are essentially religious problems. If we are to eliminate or reduce prejudice, we must do it by religion and psychology, and since it is obvious that it will be a long time before even a majority of people will let themselves be subject to religion, we must continue and increase our work in the social and legal areas in order to protect minority groups. But the reduction of prejudice in people will occur only as they obtain economic, political, psychological and religious security.

And since there is never a period in history when there is absolute economic and political security, great emphasis must be placed on religion. For only religion can effect a real and permanent elimination of prejudice. This is not to say that church folk are without prejudice. It is all too clear that some church folk are among the most violent of prejudiced people. This is not a condemnation of religion but of the people themselves. Their sin is greater than that of those outside the church because church members know better. The same holds true of doctors, scientists, professors, etc. Here, too, you will find intensely prejudiced men. Their sin is greater than that of less educated people because these men know better, too. It should be clear then that prejudice is not primarily due to ignorance or lack of education. It is due to psychological and religious adolescence. By the same reasoning, the cure of prejudice is psychological and religious maturity.

5

SOCIAL MORES AND CUSTOMS

WE come now to perhaps the most difficult and complex problem of all and one which underlies and influences all other social problems such as economic, political, and racial issues. This problem is often described as that of social mores or customs. By these terms are meant the vast accumulation of habits, attitudes, actions, and ideas that make up any given national environment. These factors are often unwritten, largely unconscious, and unexamined by most people. They are the ways of our society and all of us tend to conform to accept these ways as norms for our living. These mores or customs are derived from many sources—from religion, from philosophy, from economics, politics, tradition, from experience. It is more or less an unconscious evolution, yet one which is generally accepted and practiced. Another word for this is culture.

Culture, because it is the structure of our environment, influences us more profoundly than our articulate and consciously taught ideas and customs. Culture is subtly and constantly ingrained into us as we grow. Most other ideas and customs we learn in school, from our reading, discussions, participation in life. These, of course, influence us, too, but not as strongly as our environmental culture. At the same time it is necessary to point out that there can be drawn no line which notes where culture ends and learned ideas begin. They are all mixed up together. Our point here is to indicate the difference between the two and the importance of culture.

It is important to examine our cultural mores and customs because they stand in sharp contrast to the ideals and attitudes set forth by Christianity. To be sure, many Christian ideas are present in our culture, but the culture as a whole is non-Christian and actually assumes the place of religion. In one sense, culture is religion because it provides an interpretation of life and stands for a definite way of living even though it has few exponents. This is perhaps a radical statement, for most people believe that our American culture is Christian. It is this belief which prompts us to state and to indicate how much of it is not Christian at all.

Let us look at the evidence. Deep within our American culture is the worship of success. Our history is full of glowing examples of men who have risen from poverty to wealth, from log cabin to President. These successes are not bad in themselves, but it is the emphasis and importance we attach to such examples. We tend to make it the ideal of life. To put it another way, we believe that every person should strive to realize and achieve success. We then define success as the attainment of wealth, or security, or social prestige, or power. The successful man, we say, is the individual who has asserted himself over against all other competition and who has won out and come to the top. And we do not ask too many questions as to how and by what methods he achieved his "success." That he got on top is what matters.

Many of our educational theories and policies encourage this type of individual self-interest and aggression by destroying the foundations of standards and values which tend to curb or direct aggression. We are taught to be cynical and suspicious of all authority, ideals, and tradition. Some of this, of course, is right and healthy, but when carried too far, as it seems to be, it results in an individual being his own god looking out for his own interests. We are educated along special lines so that we may be a master in one department of life, so that we may

succeed in one field of endeavor. We are taught that ideals are but rationalizations or mere opinions of some pressure group, that there is no objective truth in life—right and wrong are merely subjective opinions. Therefore, what matters in life is that the individual be equipped with special knowledge to win success in his chosen field. Truth and knowledge are found only in observable facts and a man has a natural right to his own self-fulfillment. He can realize himself and his desires so long as he abides by these facts and asserts his will power. Little is said about his responsibility to others, though it is assumed that to step on others is wrong. Why this is wrong is not explained because it is not a factual problem; it is a moral problem and morals are under suspicion. It is usually explained by an appeal to "common sense" or "enlightened reason," that is, it is just not practical to step over people—it only gets you in trouble. Our educational culture, then, focuses attention upon individual self-interest. Its primary emphasis is to teach us how to get what we want without hurting too many other people who want the same things. It reduces truth and wisdom in life to observable facts, but it fails to provide us with any method of interpreting and correlating these facts. It fails to raise or answer the questions as to whether what we want is creative or destructive, good or bad, healthy or unhealthy. It is just assumed that the rational and scientifically educated person always wants purely good and creative things—an assumption not verified by the facts of human nature. This educational culture assumes belief in democracy but cannot show why democracy is good. To do so is at once to enter the field of values, faith and morals and these subjects are not scientific facts, but philosophical and religious interpretations of facts and basic beliefs. The foundations of democracy are certain beliefs about the inherent equality and dignity of men as children of God, and the doctrine of sin which asserts that no man or small group of men are ever wise or good enough to rule all other men. Yet our educational theories destroy these

beliefs by trying to show that such doctrines are "mere subjective opinions" or "autocratic and unfounded dogmas of superstitions." Our culture, therefore, believes in democracy, but proceeds to undermine it by hacking at its very foundations. It believes in democracy because it is still alive and "practical" and affords us the opportunity to live in it, and because it seems to make sense. But democracy cannot live long without its roots and its source of energy. If and when it should become imperiled, it will collapse because it has no foundation. We are in a situation now where a crisis is at hand. It is as if we had been living in a warm house well-heated by a good furnace. Our culture is trying to put out the fire. If it succeeds the fire will go out. Yet for a while, the house remains warm and all seems well. But soon it will begin to cool and then get very cold. Then we are in trouble because the fire has been put out. These things are not easy to demonstrate and point out, because they reveal themselves only gradually in our general attitudes. Of course, various philosophers expose and articulate these theories into a system which is called "naturalism" or "experimentalism" or "scientific rationalism," but for most of us, we do not read or understand philosophy. The mass of people live by this philosophy, this culture, but we do not understand or critically examine it. It is our cultural environment and it influences us deeply.

Perhaps another example will help make it more clear. Our culture worships the "practical man." We have a deep distrust of ideas, philosophy, theology. We refer to professors as "impractical long-hairs," to ministers as "starry-eyed dreamers." Whenever we get into trouble, we always ask for "the practical, hard-headed business man." "We want action, not theory." This attitude reveals several things about us and our culture. First, it shows that we are mentally lazy. It is difficult to wrestle with ideas; it takes time, study, and effort. We do not want to do that; it's too much like work. Secondly, it reflects guilt-feelings about our own intelligence and education. Since we know that

we are not prepared to debate ideas with the experts, we justify our own inadequacy and project our own ignorance by accusing the intelligentsia of being ignorant, *i.e.*, impractical, superstitious, visionary, etc. This relieves us of the responsibility of thinking things through and of finding meanings behind events. Thirdly, it reveals how strongly we are influenced by our naturalistic culture into believing that immediate facts alone are truth and that theory, ideas, ideals, interpretations are unreliable and subjective guesses or opinions. Fourthly, it shows that we are impatient and want an immediate action and solution to problems. This, in turn, reflects our belief that all problems are simple and have a simple answer. All that is needed is quick practical action and presto, the problem is solved. Theories and ideas and moral questions tend to show us that problems in life are not simple nor are the answers simple. This distresses us and means that if we accepted these interpretations, we should have to struggle and work and even then could not be sure of a "successful solution." This insecurity irritates us, so we discard these interpretations and demand action—practical action. We are afraid of tomorrow, so we want some success and satisfaction today. Again, it is essentially an egoistic self-security which prompts this demand. Either we have some security already and are afraid of losing it, or we have not security and want it desperately now. Therefore, let's be "practical," we want no "pie in the sky by and by," we want it now.

This is an all-too-brief account of culture. It is more properly studied in the fields of philosophy of religion and sociology, but it has profound effects upon ethical decisions. Its importance here is mentioned because it affects our life to such a vast degree. My point then is this: that when we are confronted by ethical decisions, we must be aware of the large part in which our culture tends to influence our decisions. Our culture is essentially egoistic and self-interested. Therefore, it tends to make us decide issues in terms of what's in it for me. Christianity, on the other hand,

tends to make us ask what is really right, what I must do even though it will probably cost me something. That is why we can assert that our culture is something far different from Christianity. Our culture tends to make us interested only in our own private desires and in a superficial success. Christianity tends to make us interested in what is objectively right and true and in a success which is profound and paradoxical. Religion believes in self-fulfillment and success, but defines it in different terms than does our culture. Our culture says that success is found in material security—either financially or socially—and that success and happiness can be pursued directly by self-assertion. Christianity says the reverse; that success is achieved only when man overcomes the contradictions of good and evil that are within himself, that this is done only when a man lives with and according to God's will and spirit, that success and happiness are by-products. They cannot be pursued directly. If a man tries to do God's will from the motive of love of God, then success and happiness will inevitably come. If he serves God from the motive of finding his own self-satisfaction, he will lose it. That is why Jesus said, "Seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness and all these things shall be yours as well" (Mat. 6:33). And even more profoundly, "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mat. 10:39). Which is to say, that when a man loses his egoistic strivings and inordinate self-assertions, he will actually begin to find his real self and attain genuine creative self-fulfillment. This is the paradox of life and the paradox of Christian ethics.

Thus, when confronted by ethical decision, if we are aware of the vast influence of our culture, we will be on the lookout for the great pressure of self-interest and all the clever rationalizations which will be present in us. Thus, in our examples of economic and political questions in the previous chapters, we tried to indicate how difficult it is for a secure middle or upper class individual to be fair and objective in his attitude towards

labor, how difficult it is for a laborer to be fair towards his employer, how difficult it is for a materially secure person to be favorable towards social changes, how difficult it is for an insecure person to be content with orderly social change. In short, how difficult it is for all of us to be objective and to seek to do what is right and to act from pure motives. It is difficult not only because of the sin that is inside of us, but also because of the pressure of our culture which is also partly sinful. It presses us to act from the motives of self or group interest and provides us with excellent rationalizations for so doing.

What makes this problem of culture all the more difficult is that it is not by any means totally un-Christian. If it were definitely anti-Christian most of us could see its danger. But there are many Christian ideals present in our culture. The difficulty is that they are lifted out of the Christian religion and slipped into our culture at convenient places and often interpreted in a special and different way than in Christianity. For example, the Christian ideas of the goodness of man—his dignity, uniqueness, his possibilities for great virtue and achievement—are all included in our culture, but the other half of the Christian view of man —his sin, self-deception, and destructive energies—are regarded as superstitious dogma. Thus, our culture has a very optimistic view of man. That is why it believes that if man is sufficiently educated by scientific facts and asserts himself he will always seek the good, the creative. There is supposed to be some kind of pre-established harmony in life whereby if all men assert themselves rationally and naturally and with "enlightened self-interest" everything will work out to the satisfaction of all. Hence, the emphasis upon individual self-expression. That this is a fantastically optimistic view of man is shown by recent history. Our culture has learned that this is not true about people of other nations. We found, almost too late, that we could not deal with Hitler on such terms. However, our culture still seems to believe that this estimate is at least true of Americans. Such national

pride and arrogance betrays a suspicion that perhaps we are wrong, but we are not prepared to admit it. Proof of this arrogance is seen in the deep and widespread belief that if only all other countries were as enlightened and as democratic as we there wouldn't be any more wars, conflicts and troubles! It is the old, old story of the sin of pride—it is always the other fellow who is wrong, ignorant, the cause of trouble; it just can't be us!

This is our culture then. It is our environment in which we are nurtured. Therefore it influences us very greatly. If we are to cultivate ethical sensitivity and act from Christian motives, we shall have to be aware of the philosophy of our culture, of its vast conscious and unconscious influence upon us, and take it into account when we try to decide upon ethical problems and activities. This means that to be a Christian in society is a very difficult thing. For not only is it hard to make ethical judgments, it is also hard to act with firm conviction and resolute action. For to act responsibly may often mean that you will differ from the majority. It is easy to follow the crowd; it takes power and courage to differ from the crowd. Thus, if our country should embark upon an aggressive war, the Christian would have to say "no." That is not easy. In the first place, it would be difficult for him to get the full story on why and how the war is aggressive. Secondly, he would be called a traitor, a yellow cur, and so on. It would not be easy living. It takes courage to be a Christian, to stand firmly upon one's convictions and to act upon them.

6

SUMMARY

IN summarizing this section on war, economics, politics, racial and cultural problems, it may well be that the reader will feel that Christian ethics has actually offered him little guidance on how to act in these areas of life. The conclusion might seem to be that Christianity offers no guidance at all in these complex problems. Indeed, it seems to add to the confusion. For it says that a Christian can be either a pacifist or a nonpacifist, Democrat or Republican, laborer or capitalist, radical, liberal, conservative. In fact, he can be all of those things and more. Yet they can't all be right. Isn't this confusion?

Such a criticism is partly justified and by way of answer to this impression we shall summarize this section. The value and relevancy of applying Christian insights and standards to practical social and political problems is this: Christianity believes that conflicts arise because of the clash of self-interest. Individuals and groups of individuals want certain things. So do other people. Hence, a conflict. Because of the sin of man and his culture, which is partly an expression of that sin, each person and group thinks that it is more right and more virtuous and more entitled to its wants than it really is, and it believes it is more right than its opponents. Christianity's rôle is to point out this fact of self-interest in all problems and in all people. Its rôle is to remind all of us that problems are more difficult than we think they are, that we are not as holy and wise as we think

we are, and of the difficulties in making a fair and right decision. Thus, our ethics restrains extremists of all kinds, attacks pride and self-righteousness and its consequent fanaticism, reactionary or radical violence, and destruction. Our religion tries to help us act from more pure and creative motives than narrow self-interest. It illumines our clever rationalizations and pierces through our mask and false fronts and helps us to be honest even if it hurts. It also holds high the ideals towards which we must strive, thereby giving us a criterion or standard from which we can make judgments on the issues of the day, and by which we can tell at least partly whether we are going backwards or forwards.

Nevertheless, it is still true that Christian ethics offers us no precise and detailed blueprint as to how to act in specific and practical problems. It never can say that all Christians will vote this way and not that way, must do this and cannot do that. For this reason, it might appear that thereby Christianity is not "practical" and is actually of no real use in daily problems. However, we have tried to point out why Christianity does not give us particular answers to particular problems. The chief reason is that most of life's problems are mixtures of good and evil and therefore one cannot take one position and assume that all is right on his side. Since people are involved in every problem one cannot find a purely right answer to a conflict between people. For people, like problems, are both good and bad. A flat categorical answer or course of action pronounced as the only possible true solution or will of God would assume that one side of a conflict is wholly right and the other wholly evil. But this is almost never the case in life. A second and equally important reason why Christianity does not offer blueprints is that it would destroy the freedom of the individual and his responsibility. Whenever life is chopped up into a massive list of rights and wrongs, do's and don'ts, and these laws are assumed to be God's will, all individual freedom is destroyed. A man either obeys the

laws or he doesn't. That is his only choice. He has no freedom to think things out, to act reasonably. No attention is paid to his motives, his intentions, his reason. He is a slave who submits unquestioningly or who rebels without rights. Legalism and Phariseeism—ancient and modern—is precisely this attempt to offer concrete and indisputable guidance for particular actions. Because life and its problems are so difficult, all of us secretly desire authoritative guidance. That is why we often permit authoritarianism to develop, whether it be in ethics or politics. But it will destroy us. That is why Jesus was so emphatic and direct in his attack upon the authoritarian legalism of his time. Such a system destroys our participation and responsibility for thinking, criticizing, acting in life.

On the other hand, none of us can be absolutely free. If we have no standards or ideals, then each man is his own god. My ideas are as good or as bad as yours. Indeed, there would be no way of telling whether they were good or bad, right or wrong. If everybody were absolutely free to think and act as he chose, we should have anarchy and destruction. With no common or objective standards we could never criticize anyone else. Murder, torture, exploitation, slavery, would all be justifiable so long as there are people who believe in them. If we believe differently but have no criterion of morals we cannot protest against them because our ideas are just our ideas and their ideas are just theirs. The most you can say is that we differ. But if ever we say that one set of ideas is better than another, or more right, then we are at once presupposing some standard of "best" or "right." Thus, complete unlimited freedom is not really freedom but chaotic anarchy, which is just as destructive as authoritarian slavery.

Christianity, therefore, prescribes that very delicate but very essential tension between authority and freedom, direction and initiative, criterion and application. Christianity gives us the ideals and standards towards which we must go and by which

we can make analyses and critical judgments. These ideals or general laws are not just opinions hatched in a monastery, they are asserted to be God's will and purpose for mankind, they are the very structure of life, objectively real and present in creative life, just as there are natural laws of growth and decay, gravity, motion, etc., in nature. These are the laws, the limits which define our freedom and keep us from landing in anarchy. These laws make freedom possible. Thus, we are free to apply these general ideals and insights to concrete particular problems. Because we are finite and sinful creatures, we vary in our applications and solutions. Not to differ would mean either that we were all perfect and could not err, or that we were all slaves and could not think, hope, criticize, or act.

Two things, then, must be avoided if any society is to endure and be creative. One, unlimited individual freedom and the absence of any common standard of ideals and values; and two, any authoritarian dictatorship which sets up rigid, inflexible laws defining action in all particular acts of life. Both will destroy man and his society. What is important, therefore, is to have an ethical system which gives us the fundamental bases of values, principles, ideals, and then leaves us the responsibility for applying those principles to particular problems of our daily life. Christianity affirms that its ethical system does just that.

Finally, it should be apparent that the chief difficulty in acting in social problems is how to curb and overcome one's inordinate self-interest, how to overcome the influence of our egoistic culture and the severe pressure of our own sin. To be sure, Christianity offers us ideals and values and insights, but so do other religions and philosophies. Indeed, many other systems offer the same ideals. We need these ideals, but what we need even more is the power to realize these ideals, the power to overcome our sin, our influence for self-assertiveness, power to help us act from good motives. We often know what we ought to do, but seldom have the power to do it. As Paul said: "I do not

do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do" (Romans 7:19). This is the problem of sin again and how we can overcome it. It is the religious problem of conversion. In the following section, we shall deal with this problem. What is important here is to understand that Christianity's relation to social problems is not one of merely providing ideals and offering us knowledge of the way we act, but also of providing us power to act responsibly, resolutely, creatively, and with good motives. Our world needs common agreement upon ideals and standards of values and morals, but it needs even more desperately, the power to approximate and achieve these ideals.

PART III

★

Personal Ethics

1

PERSONAL GOODNESS

IN THE previous chapters as we discussed Christian ethics in relation to social problems—economics, politics, etc.—we seemed to arrive at the conclusion that the problems were very difficult and that perhaps the chief difficulty was for any given individual to make a clear decision and act from pure motives. In short, ethical problems lead us, inevitably, back to the religious problem and the individual's own religious situation. It would be a mistake, however, to reduce social and economic problems to the problem of individual or personal religion. If it is true that social problems will never be solved until individual persons change, it is equally true that individuals will not change in character until their social problems and situations are also changed. This is very important, because there are many Christians who believe that if only everybody was a Christian, all political and economic problems would take care of themselves. These people, therefore, concentrate on personal religion alone, emphasizing the need for personal reform or conversion. They tend to be conservative or indifferent to social problems because they believe that it is necessary to change people first. To be sure, we all need to be changed and improved, but this view fails to note that social and economic insecurities tend to change people, too. A hungry man is more interested in food than in religion. A victim of economic or political injustice may be so emotionally upset that it is impossible for him to respond to religion, or if he does, he may well use religion as a dope to

calm his frustrations and anxieties. For example, many insecure people have a religion of otherworldliness which, in effect, says, "Life is tough and tragic, but hang on and believe, because life after death will be pleasant and happy." Salvation here is rescue from an evil world of sin to a heavenly world of perfection and ease. This is an escapist religion. What is important to note, then, is that great poverty, economic instability, political turmoil, etc., affect people very greatly. It makes them insecure and anxious and brings out their elemental drives for the struggle of existence. Their attitudes and reactions are not always creative, but rather directed towards securing a minimum level of existence. They are in a kind of crisis—ofttimes literally a matter of life and death. While it is true that despair and crisis may lead a man to God because at long last he sees his basic dependency in life, most people do not see such a profound meaning in crisis and so become desperate. Poverty in youth may be the nutrition of character, as Victor Hugo said, but more often than not, it is the destruction of character. What we are saying is that a dead saint is of little use to himself or to society. It is of little use to try to change a man if he is going to die of hunger tomorrow. Therefore, Christianity says that we must pay attention to the economic and social environment, reduce its insecurities and conflicts at the same time as we seek to improve our characters.

On the other hand, most people believe the opposite from this personalistic view. Most people in our time believe that all problems can be solved if only we get the right economic or political system. This is the Marxist dream and the hope of many social scientists, liberals, and other utopians. Here the idea is that evil in life is not so much in people but in systems. Therefore, devise a perfect system and all problems will be solved. Hence the Marxist says that evil in life is due to the capitalist system. Abolish that system and soon you will have the perfect stateless society. The capitalist, on the other hand, says that control and government interference and outside communistic pressure are

evil. Therefore, with a few minimum regulations and the abolition of other systems, capitalism will produce the creative and secure society. Socialists also tend to believe that once *their* system is established, all will be well. What these people fail to see is that in addition to the evil that is present in all systems, there is evil in the heart of man. Thus, no matter how perfect a system we might devise and implant upon people, we will soon pervert it, manipulate it. Pressure groups will seek favors, this group will want this, that group will want that, conflict and self-interest are present and problems will arise. Even if one were to establish a completely equalitarian city, there would be problems. For example, suppose we built a city wherein every building was of equal size and comfort—no slums, no mansions. All buildings were alike, complete with all modern conveniences. The fact remains that somebody's house or apartment faces the river or the western sunset sky, and somebody's else home faces the back of another house or the cold northern side. There will be a little struggle to get the "house with the view"—somebody will win, the other will lose. He who loses will want to "get ahead" and get a better house. He who wins will want to protect what he has.* And so a little conflict is born. Perfect equality is impossible, and evil and self-interest are not confined merely to economic and political environments but are present in the very nature of man. Because so many people do not believe in this doctrine of sin in man, we have stressed this point. Christianity is emphatically in favor of paying much attention to the environment of man. Christ constantly urged upon his disciples the necessity of feeding the hungry, helping the poor, visiting the sick, and so on. There is no question as to whether the environment or character should be changed first. The demand is that we work on both at the same time for the obvious reason that both influence each other so greatly. We have stressed the necessity of a change in character because this side has been forgotten

*Reinhold Niebuhr's example.

by most people. Therefore, in our discussion of social problems we have pointed up the fact that after all social action has been taken, the fundamental problem of the individual still remains. Moreover, we have tried to show that in addition to the complexity of social problems and lack of knowledge of facts and meanings, the chief difficulty is how a person can control his emotions, inordinate self-interest, and act from pure motives. We have tried to show that even with our limited knowledge, we often know what we ought to do, but seldom have the power to do it. All of us have certain ideals and few of us attain them. These facts, then, force us back to the problem of the individual person. It is the problem of our state of character, our motives, our heart.

Personal ethics, then, might be defined as the problem of how one can do good, or rather, how one can *be* good. In our analysis of the nature of man we tried to show that man is both good and bad, that he is a unity of paradoxes, conflicting forces and tendencies, that our chief defect or weakness was our inordinate self-interest, or sin, or to use a psychological term—egotism. What keeps us from being objective, fair and honest is not so much our ignorance but our sin. What keeps us from achieving ideals is our sin which does not want to give up the things necessary to realize the ideals. Someone once said that "all men want peace, but few men want the things that make for peace." This is profoundly true. We all want peace, but to work for various economic and political conditions which make for peace ofttimes would require some sacrifice and we are not ready to give up things. Therefore, the essential problem of ethics is the religious problem of how one can overcome his sin, his egoistic self-interest. Again, it is here that Christianity asserts a radical doctrine. Ethics is not so much a problem of the right ideals or good ideas or sound values—although these are important—as the question of how to be good enough, have enough creative power to achieve and realize values and ideals. The problem of ethics, then, is the

problem of sin that is in each person—the religious problem of power.

Let us then consider how one can become good, how one can deal with the problem of sin. The old-fashioned word is conversion; the modern word is sometimes called "integration." Our problem is this: we are all human beings composed of conflicting tendencies and drives, but our basic conflict is between our self and God; that is to say, we are so built that we cannot achieve maximum self-fulfillment, creative adjustment and happiness until we are "adjusted" to God. We have in us an image of God, a spiritual longing for meaning, power and purpose which cannot be satisfied until it comes in contact with and lives in God's meaning, power and purpose. That we have this faculty is revealed by all the desperate and age-long human endeavors to seek such meaning and purpose in life. At the same time, we all have the sin of pride which imagines that we are not dependent upon God or any other reality outside of ourselves for this security of purpose and power. Our sin is that faculty in human nature which prompts us to believe that we are self-sufficient, wise enough, good enough, strong enough to solve our personal and social problems. Therefore, we embark on all sorts of enterprises to achieve just that, and when we meet with constant failure, we still insist that the fault lies not in our sin, but in our ignorance, or our irrationality or in the environment. In more personal terms, our sin leads us to believe and act as if we were capable of mastering our destiny. While we recognize that we are all selfish at times, we still insist that we are not too selfish and that, anyway, it can be overcome by the use of reason, or will-power, or some other effort of our own. God insists that man cannot save himself, that man cannot achieve his best and most creative possibilities apart from Him. We assert that we can. Hence, the conflict.

The first step, then, in meeting the problem of sin is to be aware of it and admit it. If we do not know we are sick, we

will seldom go to the doctor. Our primary step, then, is the consciousness that we are sinful creatures, looking out for number one first, last, and always, acting from the motive of what's in it for me, rationalizing these actions by subtle and clever reasoning to disguise from ourselves as well as others, the fact that we are selfish—too selfish. How one becomes aware of this condition of character will vary with the individual. It may occur in these ways: through some selfish action, one may seriously injure another person, perhaps his best friend. This will cause the doer remorse and guilty feelings. The picture is clear to him; he sees obvious destruction caused by his now obvious selfishness. Or, another person who has a reasonably honest mind, might be struck with the fact that he has many good intentions but seldom carries them through. He recalls the many instances and sees how he compromised here and there and chose the easy and socially acceptable path. But the fact remains that he did something less than he intended to do. Or with the advance of psychological knowledge, many persons are now more aware of the phenomenon of rationalization. They know more about motive, intention, reason, etc., and therefore understand our various pretenses. Or a reflective and discerning person might see the conflicts and destructions wrought in national and international events by obvious selfish claims and then make the transference and find the same tendencies in himself. A leading figure seems to be power-mad, yet in my own private desires, I know that I too want power—not power of world tyranny, but perhaps power over women, or my neighborhood, or my business and all the prestige it brings. Or perhaps a crisis in life, a severe economic or social blow will produce the awareness that part of the cause of this setback was a strong egoistic demand and expectation that one particular thing in life would solve all problems. If it was gained, all would be fine; if it was lost, all is lost—but is all lost? This question may be the start for real self-examination. Finally, religious insight and the fact that we already have an

image of God in us may make us aware of the fact of sin. There are other ways, too, but regardless of the manner, the primary step is to be aware of sin and admit it.

Perhaps this is really two steps. For to be aware of sin and then to admit it are not always easy. We may be aware of it, but admit it only intellectually or admit only minor defects such as a few prejudices, or mistakes or temptations. In religion, admit means admitting sin with the heart and mind, admitting that we are selfish not just in occasional little things, but at the very core and center of our heart and character. It means acknowledging that we cannot overcome it by education, by will-power, by effort of our minds. And for most of us, this sort of admission involves a certain amount of despair—the despair of being aware of the evil in us and of trying to overcome it by our own efforts and seeing them fail utterly and end in tempting us to even more subtle and clever attempts to overcome it. This despair is a part of genuine spiritual wrestling. It hurts to see ourselves as we really are. That is why even unconsciously we set up blocks, areas of resistance against discovery; that is why we almost instinctively resent criticism—we are afraid that it might be right. Thus, to admit our sin is to do something that we do not want to do. But because we have caught a glimpse, an awareness, of what is creative and good which we also want, it produces this conflict. The element of despair arises when we see a vision of happiness and security and then set out to get it only to find that the harder we try the further away the goal recedes. We want to live a glorious, abundant, and happy life, yet the harder we try the more miserable life becomes. This is despair—to want something genuinely and admittedly good, then to try for it sincerely, only to find that the harder you try the less you achieve. But this is what actually occurs in the problem of conversion. We cannot save ourselves by our own efforts even though we want to desperately and try to resolutely. So the real admission of sin is not an easy thing because really to admit it means that

we have tried not to admit it but yet could not keep up the pretense. It means that we have wrestled and lost. Now, at long last, we see through the folly of our many attempted escapes and artificial solutions. It has hurt us, it is not pleasant, but we have found the truth about ourselves as we really are.

A. *How One Can Be Good*

This fact of awareness and admission of sin is stressed precisely because too many people think such a step is an easy one, too many preachers make it out to be easy. This is because sin is identified with little obvious defects like gossip, adolescent conceit, drinking too much, etc. It is easy to admit routine character defects and not a few people take pride in such "frankness" and "honesty." Or people make it easy by admitting the sin but at the same time believing they have overcome it by some easy formula such as believing in a magic ceremony of abiding by a few moralistic rules easy to abide by, or by identifying simple belief in God with the actual deliverance from sin. The truth of the matter is that sin is not an easy problem nor has it an easy answer. Precisely because it lies at the root of our very personality, it is extremely difficult to deal with it and master it. To deal with sin is to deal with dynamite. To solve something that lies at the center of our being involves upsetting our whole self. That is why Jesus never gave out any simple little methods or answers. He proclaimed the most radical, far-reaching, and transforming demand—"He who finds his life will lose it" (Mat. 10:39); "Unless one is born anew—" (John 3:3). Here is no little rule of thumb or chummy advice on how to win friends and influence people, or how to be a success in ten easy lessons. Here was a soul-shaking and shocking demand—lose your life. And Paul amplified this demand when he said: "I die every day" (I Cor. 15:31) and "Put on the *new* nature" (Col. 3:10).

What is meant, then, by this astounding demand? Of course,

lose your life does not mean that we are supposed to commit suicide. Actually, it means to lose our proud, egotistic, sinful self. When one has become aware of his sin and admitted and experienced some pang of despair, losing your life means at this point to stop struggling. That is, to stop trying to pretend we are not destructively selfish, stop trying to overcome this selfishness by our own efforts. It means, literally, give up, quit, die. It means that our attempt to overcome our insecurity, anxiety, and the resulting escapes must be killed. The attempt is no good, kill it. This is self-surrender—the surrender of our egotism whereby we acknowledge that we cannot save ourselves. This experience may be roughly compared to a person with a serious disease such as cancer or tuberculosis. To effect a cure, the patient must first become aware of his illness, then admit it—really admit and face the tragic fact. Then he must surrender himself. He must give up all notions that he can save himself by various quack remedies. The only hope of cure is to give up and go to the doctor and surrender completely to him. This is equally true of mental patients. They must surrender and go to the psychiatrist. Similarly, we who are spiritually sick must surrender and go to our spiritual doctor—Christ, the spiritual physician. This is what losing your life means.

B. *Conversion*

The next step in conversion is also a difficult step. It is the step of faith and trust. And here is the element which requires us to go beyond our faculties of reason. Faith always includes some elements of rationality, but only up to a point. There is necessarily a kind of gap or leap, where a person has to believe or trust without absolute proof beforehand. This seems to scare people, but actually, all people make this leap of faith in a thousand different ways. When a man starts out on business he has no certain guarantee beforehand that he will succeed. When two people get married, they have no proof that their marriage

will be a happy one. In both instances, there are "evidences," but no certain proof. The enterprise is continued in the belief, the faith, that it will succeed. There is the element of leap here, too. So in religion, faith is indispensable and a necessary condition for starting and continuing in religion. It is a remarkable thing how very similar is conversion to psychiatric methods. When a patient goes to a psychiatrist, certain conditions must be fulfilled if the patient is to be cured. In addition to the awareness and admission of his mental illness, the patient must also make the leap of faith. That is, he must believe and trust that the doctor can cure him. Yet he has no certain proof that the doctor can cure him. He has certain evidences. He knows or has heard that the doctor has cured other people. He knows that because he is a doctor, he should be able to cure him. But he does not know for sure whether the doctor can cure him—an individual with his own unique personality. Yet, if cure is at all possible it is absolutely essential that the patient trust the doctor. He must make the leap of faith. And in this leap there is the complete self-surrender to the doctor. The patient dies in the sense that he gives up struggling and trying to cure himself. He surrenders to the doctor and his wisdom. He trusts him to save him. When this occurs, treatment can be started and not before. This is what happens in psychiatry, yet it is precisely the same in religion. If we substitute Christ for the doctor, the process is the same. Religious conversion or spiritual healing requires self-surrender to the God in Christ, trust and belief in Him. "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). "Search me, O God . . . try me" (Psalm 139:23–24). "He knoweth the secrets of the heart" (Psalm 44:21).

Then comes the "treatment," the actual process of cure. Here again, the similarity between psychiatry and religion is marked. In this stage, however, the technique varies but the principles and effect are the same. In psychiatric analysis, there is considerable "talking" out in free association. In religion, of course,

this cannot be done in the same way since one cannot literally talk with God. But the process or goal is the same. The aim is to find out the truth about ourselves. In religion, we find out truth about our spiritual problems by knowing Christ. This can be done by prayer, meditation, self-examination, reading the New Testament, going to church, partaking of Holy Communion, etc. Here one gains a picture of Christ, understands the truths He revealed, becomes aware of the power He made available to us. Thereby, in comparison, we can see where we stand, the needs we require, the meaning we must have, the direction to travel, and the power necessary to proceed in that direction. This process sometimes involves a kind of falling in love with Christ. In fact, in many of the accounts of conversion of great men, the phrase "falling in love with Christ" is specifically stated. This is remarkably similar to the psychological process called "transference" wherein the patient, during analysis, very often falls in love with the doctor. This is not at all surprising, for love always involves a strong element of self-surrender and faith. And it is precisely this factor of love which produces worship. It is the most natural thing in the world to express adoration, praise, thanksgiving, humility, confession, worship to the object of one's affection. Thus, when one surrenders to God, one comes to love Him and therefore to worship Him and serve Him. Of course, this process is not sudden, nor is it in psychiatry. It may take months, years. In one sense, it is never completed, but the steps that are achieved are valuable and important. This, then, is conversion. But we must describe in detail its effects and results.

When one surrenders himself and his selfishness and he learns and comes to know God emotionally and intellectually as described above, he is not thereby perfect and without sin. Salvation does not mean that thereafter on earth a person is perfect and without any defects, troubles, or anxieties. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8). I stress this because some few people regard sal-

vation and conversion as a static achievement. They believe that you are saved once and for all and that after conversion all that is left to do is to enjoy it and help others to achieve it. This leads to gross self-righteousness and the worst form of sin—spiritual pride. The truth of the matter is that salvation is a dynamic process as is all of life. While a particular part of the conversion experience may be sudden and dramatic, as was Paul's conversion on the Damascus road, the other parts of conversion are always in the making and take time. After his conversion, Paul spent a number of years in solitude developing and maturing the soul-shaking event that occurred to him. It should be obvious that one cannot fathom the meaning and purpose of life in a day, nor understand God's will and wisdom in a flash, nor conquer and readjust his personality in a week. Religion is a dynamic on-going process. What happens in conversion may well be and often is dramatic, though not always, and it is emotionally and spiritually upsetting and difficult. Self-surrender is always difficult. But the building-up process, putting on the new man, finding your life, is usually a gradual process. It is gradual because we never can eliminate sin entirely from our personalities. Salvation means that in the process of surrendering to God, He has given us new power which breaks the power of sin. It does not destroy sin entirely. It provides us with power to combat sin. We will continue to be tempted, to be insecure and anxious, we will give in to sin now and then, but over-all, as we develop and mature, we will gain more and more control over our selfishness. The same thing occurs in psychiatric therapy. The patient does not recover in a day. Even after prolonged analysis, he has to wrestle with his problem. It is a struggle and takes time. What is important is that the doctor has given him knowledge and released new power with which he can wage his battle successfully. And while he still has his defects and anxieties, yet he has an inner peace, security, confidence, which enables him to carry on

his "adjustment" with resolute effort and hope and serenity. When Christianity speaks of "the inner peace that passeth understanding, which the world can neither give nor take away" it speaks of the power and knowledge of God which we receive in the act of our self-surrender and faith. It does not free us from all cares and worries and make us smug and content, it gives us the quiet inner serenity which enables us to continue our struggles in life. Armed with new truth and power, we have more confidence to face the problems of life—both within ourselves and in the world around us.

What is gained then in the process of conversion or salvation is this: First, we gain new knowledge. This knowledge is not specific. God does not reveal to us the answer to our homework problem in physics. He does not tell us what will happen to us twenty-nine days from now at 2:13 P.M. The truth He reveals to us in Christ is the general meaning and purpose of life, the structures of love and creativity, the conditions necessary to achieve them, the meaning of history, the general purpose and will of the Creator. To sum it up in one phrase, God gives us the "understanding of life and our part in it." But mere knowledge is not enough because we are more than just intellects. God gives us power. Power to fight the battle of selfishness, prejudice, and pride. This power is essentially creative love. And it is this which gives us the spontaneous force we so desperately need. To be able to do what is right not because we must, but because we want to is the height of creativity and joy. When we act purely from obligation, we do only what is literally required of us and no more. Our heart isn't in it, we say. We are not enthusiastic, therefore we do not exert much power, imagination, or insight. But when we "love" something, really want to do something, we will pour all our energies and abilities into the effort and will see it through to its completion. Indeed, we will sacrifice anything, if need be, to work for it. Hence, great

power is generated. Our heart is *in it,* and, because it is, great is our joy. Here is self-fulfillment, the finding of our truly creative life.

This is the answer to the question, "What difference does Christianity make?" The difference it makes is most clearly seen in personal creativity. Without Christianity, a person seeks to achieve self-fulfillment by various methods which involve the realization of essentially selfish desires though they are rationalized and socially acceptable. Here a person conforms to social standards because he must, not because he particularly wants to. He conforms to certain moral and religious ideals because it is socially prudent to do so, but not because he particularly wants to do so. Indeed, when some crisis or event occurs which threatens his desires, he will protest against standards, or abide by them with deep inner revolt. This is the way most of us live. It is essentially a dreary round of seeking egoistic security, of being thwarted, or, if "succeeding," of being fearful lest we lose what security we have found. All our energies and drives are turned inward into ourselves in the attempt to maintain our ego-pattern. The drives that are turned outward are directed along lines that will fulfill the demands of our anxious desires. What good we do, we do from the motive of supporting our ego-pattern, of achieving our desires. What good we do, we do because we must, not because we want to. This adds to our restlessness. We are like boiling teapots—conflicting pressures and forces all cooped up and heated by the struggles of life until we either release the pressure through devious and wasteful ways, or else just blow up. In either case, all our tremendous possibilities for creative power are wasted and dissipated.

What Christianity does is to organize and channel our drives and energies and guide them out into useful, creative enterprises. They are poured, as it were, into reality, into the living of life as it really is. Christianity makes a tremendous difference because it gives us insight and meaning and purpose. Instead of

approaching problems with the fearful attitude of whether it will hurt us or not, Christianity provides knowledge to approach the problem from the view which asks, "What is right and creative here, what is bad and destructive? What is real and permanent and ideal and how does this approximate the ideal?" etc. Here is the "objective" approach. It is above all the anxious levels of prejudice, worry about social prestige, "success" and "failure," ego-pattern, and so on. Here is love of truth itself—which makes one free from these destructive factors. Secondly, Christianity makes the difference because the power to love is given—the power to love people as persons, to love right, to love the purpose and reality of life and therefore to work for its achievement. This is the most potent creative force in life. And those who have experienced married love already know some of the force of this kind of love. This is the power to work for things with free spontaneity. This kind of power harnesses and directs all our creative energies and therefore reduces their conflicts and frustrations. To be able to live life and to participate in it because it is meaningful and because you want to above all else is the height of success.

Because we used the analogy of a patient and a psychiatrist it is necessary to point out the difference between faith and love towards the doctor and that towards God. Because the doctor is only a man, it is essential that he transfers back the patient's love and faith to some reality, enterprise, or cause. If the patient ends up by still trusting and "loving" the doctor, that patient is not cured because he is too dependent for his own good. The purpose of psychiatric treatment is not to get the patient to lean on the doctor or anyone else, but to help him to stand on his own two feet and enable him to make his own decisions and adjustment. Therefore, the doctor must be sure that the transference is directed away from the doctor and out into the world, into life. In religion, a man falls in love with God, self-surrenders, trusts him. The charge is often made that thereby a man becomes a slave to God which is just as bad and destructive to

the personality as being a slave to a doctor, dictator, wife, friend, or anybody else. This criticism stems from the confusion of defining God as merely one person among other persons, one object among other objects. But God is neither just another person nor an object. For the purpose of the argument, let us say that God is Truth ("I am the way, and the truth, and the life"—John 14:6). If a man surrenders to truth, trusts it, becomes enslaved to it, it would be folly to say that such a thing is bad or destructive. Indeed, what we want is loyalty to truth. What Christianity means here is that God is not just a part of truth, but that God is the creative and meaningful reality in life. Therefore, if we surrender to that we are attaching ourselves to the creative power and purpose of life. That is the only kind of slavery which is at the same time perfect freedom. This is a profound paradox, and perhaps it is best expressed in the ancient Christian hymn, "O Lord, make me captive and then I shall be truly free." The point is that when one is "enslaved" to God, he is free from the destructive forces of anxiety, desire, prejudice, hatred, egotism, lustful passions, jealousy, greed, etc. The most real freedom in life is to be free from destructive forces of anxiety, desire, prejudice, hatred, egotism, lustful passions, jealousy, greed, etc. The most real freedom in life is to be free from degenerate and destructive forces. The most real freedom is to be the servant of creative love. Thus, there is a difference between surrender to a man and surrender to God. Surrender is a temporary necessity in medicine and psychiatry. In religion it is a permanent necessity.

Yet even in religion this surrender to God is not without its element of God giving back to us the responsibility for living. Living in obedience to God's will and purpose is not really obedience for such a word connotes forced allegiance. The redeemed man's relation to God is a free response. Serving God is not the spiritual tyranny of having every thought, motive and deed predetermined by God. We are not puppets on a heavenly

string. We are human beings created so that we are free under certain conditions to surrender and love God, or to deny Him and love ourselves. When a man is converted, he responds freely to God. As the author of the first Epistle of John described it, "we love, because he first loved us" (I John 4:19). It is the mutual response of spontaneous love. This relationship results in the acquisition of new power and new insight and truth. We are then responsible for applying and using these factors in our daily life. God does not tell us when to get up in the morning, how to dress, how to vote, what books to read, etc.—this is our responsibility. God releases us from the power of our selfishness and anxiety and grants us new insight and power with which we can face and live life. There is no spiritual tyranny which destroys our personality and individuality. Quite the contrary, this is the height of self-fulfillment and maturity—to live by the power of creative love and truth and to have the responsibility of expressing it in our own unique way.

One other difference between psychiatry and religion must be noted here. The doctor directs the loyalty and energies of his patient from himself outward to various secular causes. The healthy personality requires that our drives and energies be directed outward from ourselves; otherwise they will well up within us and make us like the steaming teapot. This principle of "losing yourself" in some great cause or enterprise is sound, but there is a limit to it. Pouring one's energies into a great social or political movement is psychologically healthy—up to a point. This procedure presupposes that the movement is a creative and good one—and such is not always the case. For example, the Nazi movement was a most dynamic and attractive movement and those who poured themselves into it achieved some degree of new meaning and adjustment. But because the movement was essentially destructive, it led to the destruction of their personalities. And when it finally collapsed, the shock and disruption to the personality were severe. Adjustment of personality to so-

ciety and environment is necessary and healthy but the question must be asked constantly, "Is the society, cause, environment, a creative and good one?" If it is not, then what really happens is that a man adjusts himself to evil and that will destroy him. To be sure, the Nazi phenomenon was an unusual and extreme example. But the same is true about many other movements in history. Blind devotion to Communism or Capitalism produces unhealthy attitudes. Surrender and loyalty to any human enterprise result in idolatry and are therefore ultimately destructive. Christianity, therefore, says that it is not enough to channel our energies on any noble cause because no secular movement is real, creative, good enough to demand uncritical loyalty and service. And if critical allegiance is given it presupposes adherence to some reality or standard above the cause from which that cause is criticized. This is exactly the point; Christianity says that the basic creative power in life is God, for He alone is permanent, eternal truth and creativity. We work and pour ourselves into various causes and movements in so far as they express and approximate God's truth and reality. Because we seek the Kingdom first, we have a standard of values by which we can measure human efforts. Because we are "adjusted" to God we have the power to work for the realization of ideals regardless of the many failures we experience. Our devotion is not to some movement which will enslave us and leave us empty when it fails; our loyalty is to that which does not fail or change.

Movements in history which claim absolute devotion evoke tremendous appeal and energy from people for a short while. But because they imagine themselves more perfect and wise and good than they really are, they ultimately become reactionary and collapse—this leaves people disillusioned, cynical and maladjusted. They served a god that was not God, but only a human enterprise. Thus, Christianity says that while adjustment and direction of energies to various human causes may offer temporary health, actually they do not because the cause is still only

human and therefore filled with evil as well as good, and destined to some kind of failure and weakness which will leave the person weak and maladjusted. If blind devotion and surrender to one man are destructive, by the same reasoning it is equally destructive to surrender completely to a collection of men who represent some cause or movement. Surrender to anything less than God —unchanging creative reality—results in slavery to whatever evil is present in the environment and when that cause is weakened or defeated, the individual has to make another adjustment, but is meanwhile disillusioned and maladjusted. Dynamic and progressive health can be had only by surrender to God and then by pouring oneself into causes which further creative values, like love and justice. In this way, one's adjustment does not depend upon the success or failure of any particular cause. His allegiance and devotion are to the basic principles of God which do not change. Love is always love regardless of whether various movements partly express it or partly deny it. It still remains true and real, and new expressions of it must be sought. Later, we shall try to show how this devotion to God rather than just any secular movement results in the only way to keep ethical energy strong and constant. The point here is to show that devotion to "good causes" is good, but not good enough.

Let us summarize this chapter on conversion by noting its relation to ethical activity. We have tried to indicate that the chief problem of ethics is how to be good, how to act from pure motives, how to act with spontaneous and creative love. Since we are all creatures permeated with inordinate self-interest (sin) and all the consequent anxieties which prompt us to desperate and selfish action, we cannot by our own efforts really achieve creative ethical action. Therefore, we must be changed. This forces us to the religious problem of conversion or salvation or redemption or integration. We then describe conversion as a dynamic and gradual experience, not a static achievement of perfection. This conversion results in breaking the strangle hold

of sin, and in thereby giving us new knowledge and new power. Thus armed, we can participate in life with more creative deeds. Because we are in touch with God, we are changed and can act from more objective truth, and more pure motives, and with more ethical power. But, of course, we are not ever fully free of self-interest and sin, nor can we ever be completely objective. As we experience conversion, we are changed only a little, and only gradually through the months and years can the change be seen clearly. But new serenity, sensitivity, new eagerness and happiness are noticed almost immediately. Maturity has begun and it is an exhilarating experience. When this type of conversion is experienced, it has profound ethical results. It means that the gap between doing what we ought to do and what we actually do can be narrowed. It means that now we have more power and knowledge with which to realize our ideals. It means that we are "new men" who are in the process of finding our real selves and who thereby can take more responsible and creative ethical action. It means that we can be more objective, have purer motives, act with more resolute action. This is why religion is so essential to ethics. Religion provides power and insight, changes character so that it can act ethically. Without this, all ethical systems will forever remain merely systems of ideals and values which we discard as "impractical" or "useless" or "impossible to achieve" or "wrong" or "misleading" or "subjective opinions conjured up by priests, philosophers and kings." Ethics, then, is the problem of power and insight, and this is the province of religion. Personal conversion by religion is therefore the indispensable condition for creative ethical activity.

Let us examine now the personal side of ethics. While some people believe ethics refers only to one's actions in society, it is still true that Christian ethics also applies to the very personal area of an individual—an area which we shall call self-realization. This needs to be stressed precisely because there is a widespread feeling which says, "What I do with my own private solitude and

life is my business, and let no one tell me differently." Here is the belief which recognizes that some social responsibility is necessary but that the privacy of one's own thoughts and desires is inviolate and let no one try to dictate here. Christianity insists that ethics applies to *all* areas of life without exception. To be sure, an area of personal privacy must always be maintained in life, an area into which society cannot penetrate. Yet this area is not entirely our own for the simple reason that our very life itself is not our own. We did not create ourselves, bring ourselves up, nor wholly determine our destiny. When Paul says, "You are not your own; you were bought with a price" (I Cor. 6:19–20), he expressed a truth we often forget in our pride of self-sufficiency. In this statement, Paul is referring to the fact that Christ died for us, died that we might have the more abundant life, know more about God and the mastery of sin. For most modern minds this seems to be difficult to understand. Perhaps a recent example will make it clearer. We have just come through the most violent and destructive war in history. To anyone who fought in it in combat and saw many of his comrades die suddenly or horribly, one can only have the feeling that to have survived such terrors was a pure gift. No soldier alive today can say that he deserves to be alive while his fallen friend deserved to be killed. Many who died were far more deserving of life than we who survived. This is true of all people alive today. We are alive and enjoying the fruits of peace not because we are more virtuous and wise and good than those millions who were killed. Only an impossibly arrogant and conceited fool could believe that. We are alive and victorious by the sacrifice and death of others. Our safety and peace were bought at a staggering and ghastly price. "Ye were bought with a price." This raises the profound question of whether these men died so that we could throw away our lives in useless living, or whether they died so that we could use our lives—all of them—in creative living. Our life is a gift; we were saved from death for what? To live

as if we were gods, do what we want to do whenever we want to? If so, it was a terrible and bloody price *they* had to pay for such futile results—the dreary round of selfish conflicts, private desires, anxieties, desperate escapes, destructive bickerings and quarrels. We are not our own.

If this be so, as Christianity insists, then we have an ethical responsibility in our private and personal living. It is the responsibility of maturing creatively and responsibly. How is this done? In ethical and religious terms it means the cultivation of ethical sensitivity, the ability to meet and make decisions and then act upon them. In our analysis of conversion, we indicated how this was done. We must state here the further point that the mark of ethical maturity is the willingness to make decisions. Too many times in life, we try to avoid making decisions. We do this for several reasons: First, because decisions are usually hard to make and thereby upset us, keep us on edge, lend a new experience of insecurity; second, because we are afraid we will make the wrong decision and that would hurt our ego; third, because the action required by the decision may require effort, sacrifice, or social disapproval. Because of these difficulties we often postpone, compromise, or try to avoid decisions. To do so is to weaken one's ethical vigor and maturity. We also are inclined to ignore decisions when they have no apparent social significance. Such problems as personal habits—smoking, drinking too much, or sexual excesses of a personal nature, or the failure to use to the fullest our abilities in thinking, or physical efficiency, etc., are good examples of personal ethics. These and similar problems do not have obvious social results. Thereby, we are tempted to believe that what we do in these areas "makes no difference" and is "my own business." Actually, of course, elementary psychology can demonstrate that our personal character and habits do effect our social behavior and action. In addition, religion insists that even if it didn't, it is still important. It is the purpose of life that each individual attains self-fulfillment. This is God's will for each

of us. And, in addition to its being God's will, it is also the way one becomes happy and creative. And there is the ever-present fact that we are not our own and therefore have a certain responsibility to God who gave us our life, to Christ who enabled us to make it better, to men and women who sacrificed much to make it possible for us to continue life under better conditions, and lastly, to ourselves—"we owe it to ourselves."

At any rate, it is our primary responsibility to pay attention to our personal character and its relation to ethics. Religion is what provokes this responsibility. Without religion, ethics remains merely a system of ideals and codes divorced from our personal life. Because Christianity unites religion and ethics, the individual is encouraged to watch and examine his personal life with piercing and critical evaluation. Personal ethics involves constant self-examination—becoming aware of destructive tendencies and motives and thoughts inside of us, looking at our prejudices and their causes, our "innocent" habits, flights of fancy, erotic dreams and imaginations, our flights into unreality, our fears and anxieties, our hopes and pretensions, our prides, etc., etc. These things are *us*—our private selves—and these things determine, actually, our social action. Ethics, like charity, begins at home—right down in the very secrets of our hearts. And after examining ourselves in this fashion, it does no good to stop there and be proud of our self-analysis and courage to be honest with ourselves. The next step is to do something about our weakness. This calls for decisions and courses of action. This is personal ethics. And here in personal ethics there are no detailed rules and codes. There are only broad general principles which must be worked out differently in each individual case. The principles are the same—creative love and justice. Self-fulfillment occurs when a person overcomes his egotism and selfishness and is thereby enabled to love, to be objective, to act responsibly, to participate in life for its own sake, not out of fear or the praise and blame of men. What we are determines what we do. If the tree is good the fruit will be good.

2

SEX AND MARRIAGE

LET us examine some specific problems of personal ethics. A major problem is sex and marriage. In the past, religion has offered little help and much hindrance on these basic issues. Originally, Christianity faced these matters and offered definite guidance and insight. But Christianity's historic view of sex was forgotten in comparatively recent times, and was, indeed, perverted and misused. Religion allied itself with what is popularly called "the Victorian attitude" which forbade all discussions of sex and thereby implied that it was evil. Too many church folk today still retain that erroneous belief and add to it the naïve faith that, if you don't mention sex, nobody will think about it and therefore no trouble will occur. But the fact is that nowadays, in protest against the repression of sex in the Victorian era, the majority of people have gone overboard the other way and cast off all restraints. The mistaken popularization of Freud and the misunderstanding of his views on sex has lent credence to the idea that all control and direction of sex activity, as well as other activity, is bad. We now have a widespread movement called "self-expression." Here the idea is that each person must be allowed to develop and express himself "naturally," and with as few restraints as possible. Restrictions, control, discipline, are regarded as factors which make for frustration and attendant neurosis. So, "away with the old-fashioned moral and social codes, dogmatic views. We must be modern, emancipated from these silly superstitions. Let us be

frank and honest and express and act the way we really feel." This is the contemporary attitude towards sex. To be sure, many moral and social codes about sex should be discarded, many of the older attitudes about sex were repressive and wrong and should be changed, but the present extreme revolt has also produced some new evils. The cult of self-expression and natural desire leads to conflict and destruction. This movement is the psychological condition of unrestrained rugged individualism which leads to egoistic self-assertion and self-destruction. Just as rugged individualism in economics leads to bitter conflict, suppression and tyranny of the weak, violence by the strong, and general destruction of economic security and stability, so this type of psychological individualism leads to personal arrogance, pride, inevitable conflict, frustration, profound anxiety and consequent weakening of character and personality. Those who say that social patterns and laws are all evil because they repress individual desires have forgotten to ask the basic question of why it is necessary to have these laws, what was the condition that made such codes necessary? The shop-worn sociological dogma that all social and moral laws were devised by priests and kings to keep the masses down is nonsense. Of course, some mores and laws are artificially produced in that fashion, but to conclude thereby that all customs arise that way is pure fiction. The basic laws of order in all societies are necessary and arise precisely because of the aggressive drives of the individual. Without law and order in society, life would be intolerable. It would be the law of the jungle—dog-eat-dog, the survival of the mighty, the oppression of the weak, the decay of all in degenerate conflict. Because some laws are bad, it does not follow that all laws are bad. The universal law "thou shalt not murder" is not an evil repressive social code, it is an elementary condition of life. Were murder legalized, none of us could live without a terrible fear. To say that this law "represses" a would-be murderer and thereby contributes to his neurosis is fantastic.

The same thing holds true about sex. Many social codes and controls were and are destructively repressive. But that does not mean that all controls and codes are wrong. Christianity has a definite view about sex, but before we state these views, we must clear up two serious and widespread misconceptions of the Christian view. Many people think that Christianity believes that the body is evil, and the spirit or mind good. Because sex is associated with the body and flesh, therefore sex is evil. This is emphatically *not* a Christian view. It is primarily an Oriental and Greek viewpoint. In both these cultures there is a strong dualism of body and mind. In Christianity this is flatly denied. For the Christian position holds that while there is a difference between the body and what we call mind or spirit, there is not a radical difference. That is to say, the individual person is an essential unity of body, mind, and spirit. A person is good or bad or somewhere in between not because his body is evil and his mind good, or *vice versa,* but because of his total character and personality—which is a unity of all his components. Some of the misunderstanding probably comes from an incorrect reading of some of St. Paul's statements where he seems to imply that "the flesh is corrupt, the spirit uncorrupt" or "I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind" (Romans 7:23). This is primarily a language and translation difficulty. For if one reads carefully, it is easy to see that Paul does not regard the flesh or the body as such as inherently evil, or the mind good. Paul often spoke of spiritual sins, of bodily virtues. He well knew that good and evil are present in both body and mind. In fact, Paul is very explicit on this point when he says, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in you?" (I Cor. 3:16). It is difficult to see how this could be interpreted as a Greek dualism of body and mind, the one evil, the other good. In addition, the doctrine that God created man in his own image is a denial that the body is evil. Thus, the Christian view is clear on this point. On the matter of sex, there is no evidence any-

where in the Bible that sex is evil because it involves the flesh or the body. This leads to the second misunderstanding of Christianity's attitude towards sex. The statement is often made that the Christian faith holds that sex is evil in itself. And since the propagation of children is an obvious necessity, sexual intercourse is thereby described as a necessary evil. The phrase "born in sin" is often used to support this charge: Here the implication is that we are evil just because we are products of the act of intercourse even though it occurred in marriage. The actual meaning of the old phrase "born in sin" is an old-fashioned attempt to explain the presence of sin that is in all of us. Originally, it was never used to imply that we are sinful because of the sex that was involved in conception. This is a modern misinterpretation of an old, if clumsy, doctrine about how sin happens to be present in all of us. At any rate, historic Christianity never held and does not now subscribe to the idea that sex is evil in itself, or that sexual intercourse in the estate of marriage is evil.

What, then, is the Christian doctrine about sex? It is the same as its view about any other faculty of human nature. Christianity recognizes that sex is one of the most basic and most potent energies and drives in human nature. And, like all our other energies and abilities, such as will-power, reason, aggressiveness, fear, etc., it is neither good nor bad, creative nor destructive in itself. It all depends on how it is used, directed, controlled and expressed. Sex is the atomic power of the personality—its tremendous energy can either blow a man wide apart, or help make him a powerful creative person. Whether this force is used destructively or creatively depends upon how it is controlled, by what values and purposes it is directed, towards what ends it is channeled, and what ideals or good or healthy factors it expresses. Some examples should make this clear. If sex is used as an escape from one's own insecurity or anxiety, Christianity would say such use of sex is wrong. A

psychiatrist would probably say it was "unhealthy." Regardless of the term we use, it is wrong and unhealthy because here sex is used in a destructive way. To try to escape anxiety by escape into sexual excitement is to weaken the personality because it involves a retreat from reality and it does not solve the problem of anxiety. It affords only temporary relief from anxiety, but results in more anxiety after the escape. Christianity also says that sex is misused and wrong if it is indulged in purely for private and excessive self-gratification. This results in enslaving us to egoistic desires, and tends to make us unable to control our desires and impulses. This, in turn, tends to destroy our power and freedom to be more than animals, *i.e.,* to control and direct given powers and energies. He who is so weak as to be enslaved to all his impulses, desires and whims is little above an animal. It is ironic that so many young people describe and take pride in anyone who "plays around," who has frequent sexual intercourse outside of marriage, who "has been around and flaunted all the moral and psychological laws of sex." These people are described as "men of the world," "strong," "worldly wise," "modern," "emancipated" and "sophisticated." It is ironic because precisely the reverse is true. These people are enslaved to their erotic desires and sexual energies. They cannot control them and have even lost the will to do so. They are led around by their sex drives just as a bull is led around by a ring in his nose. They are weak; they have lost their freedom and power to control themselves. And, of course, "playing around" is as old as human nature. How, therefore, this can be described as new and modern, strong and emancipated, is tragically ironic. And should someone still believe that Christianity closes its eyes to sex, or that "playing around" is some new intelligent self-expression, all he has to do is to read almost anywhere in the Old or New Testament. There he will find descriptions of about every kind of sexual behavior, good and bad, that is possible to man. Some of our modern "realist" novelists write about sex details and prac-

tices as if they were revealing something new and daring and doing so with sensational candor. What they reveal is present in the Bible, in history books, in the whole history of man. Yet, we seem to think that all this is something new and exciting which nobody before the twentieth century ever dreamed about. It should be as obvious as night and day that sex is not some dark mysterious power that must either be spoken of in hushed fearful whispers or else revealed with a fanfare of daring, colossal and sensational exposés. It should be crystal clear that sex, like any other part of our personality, can be used or misused, for good or for evil. So Christianity insists that we do away with the old-fashioned hush about sex, and the modern sensational expressionism of sex. After this is done, we can deal with sex more intelligently and creatively.

It is in marriage and pre-marital relationships that we can perhaps best illustrate personal ethics and the sex problem. The core of marriage is love. That statement appears to be a simple little ditty put forth by moralists, sentimentalists, and simpletons. But, because it is so obvious, too many of us have forgotten it and concentrated on everything but love. Our attention nowadays is usually focused upon the techniques and methods of the marriage relationship. Sunday magazine feature articles provide us with ten "scientific" rules that "guarantee" a "perfect marriage." "Frank" and "revealing" books from two-bit publishers tell us all about the honeymoon and the mechanics of sex. Advertisements and movies picture the easy road to matrimony as consisting of allure, the right diet, the proper hair wash (and eyewash). Long articles tell us how to handle children scientifically—the watchword being "Don't repress." And so on *ad infinitum*. To be sure, most of these things are important, but they are not basic and fundamental. What is fundamental is love, not Hollywood love, but real love. For without this, all the knowledge, beauty and techniques are useless. More children are ruined by lack of affection than by bad discipline; more marriages end

in divorce because of the lack of real love by one or both parties than because they failed to read the right book on sex or used the wrong nail polish. Love is the real problem of human relationship and the problem of love is the problem of egotism and selfishness. This is where personal ethics comes in and personal religion.

The ability to love depends upon the ability to lose oneself. This is Christ's paradox applied to human relationship. In so far as we love ourselves, are too concerned about fulfilling this desire and emotional drive, of maintaining a particular ego pattern at all costs—thus far we are incapable of really loving another person. And that is what happens in real life with most of us, at one time or another. For instance, in adolescence—whether it be in high school or college—we often tend to "date" a girl not because we like her for her own sake, but because she is a very pretty girl. Therefore, if we are seen with her, other boys will congratulate us or envy us our good taste, our "way with women," and our knowledge of "how to pick 'em." To be seen with a homely girl is to be caught in shame. "What a spook she was! What's the matter with you? Lost your touch?" This hurts our pride, our ego. Thus, we tend to choose our women from the motive of social approval, from our ego pattern. Or some people choose wives or husbands not because they really love them for what they are, but from the selfish motive of what they "can do for you." Such motives are not always conscious, but they are nonetheless real and dominant. For example, some women marry for security and wealth. Some men marry merely for beauty or "sexual attraction." Still others will marry a "mouse"—some timid soul whom they can dominate and order around at will. These are examples which indicate that many people are spiritually and psychologically incapable of really loving another person. Their egotism is so great that they can love only themselves, therefore all other persons are used solely to maintain and protect or secure their own ego pattern and self-love. Everyone,

without exception, has this self-love which is a form of sin. Let no one fool himself into believing he is without it. The degree to which it is overcome is the degree to which it is possible to experience and express genuine objective love.

This factor, this fundamental, affects one's sex life very deeply. The absence of real love in sex conduct can produce serious difficulties. In marriage, if one party loves himself only, his sex conduct will be radically different from the husband who genuinely loves his wife. In the former case, the husband will pay attention only to his own self-gratification. He will therefore lack tenderness and affection, self-control and restraint. Lacking this, his wife will be abused, may not receive full satisfaction, and will probably be actually frustrated. The husband will not receive the maximum satisfaction either—since this depends upon mutual tenderness and timing and rhythm. Both of them will then be irritated, partially dissatisfied, suspicious, fearful of "incompatibility" and so on. And since we are more than biological creatures, without love sexual intercourse may satisfy some of our emotional appetites, but it will not satisfy our mental and spiritual appetites. We are a total personality, and just as in all other actions in life, if our total personality is involved—poured into it—we will gain the maximum satisfaction. Whatever part of our nature we leave out, we lose just that much satisfaction. Thus, from the Christian point of view, sexual intercourse outside of marriage is wrong and unhealthy because it is not used as an expression of genuine love (which comes only in deeply married experience). Outside of marriage it is an expression of self-gratification. Of course, it may be pure egotistic gratification in a marriage that is not one of real love. But religion says that it is not a creative use of sex power to indulge in intercourse outside of marriage. This doctrine here is a sharp offense to most modern minds, particularly to some doctors. And it is one point where religion and psychiatry have a sharp disagreement. This is because Christianity regards the primary problem of man to be

self-love (sin) while secular thought, including many schools of psychiatry, believes the chief problem to be either "repressive environments" or "semi-biological and mechanistic inner drives." Therefore, our suggested courses of action vary. Much secular therapy says that sex conduct is good or healthy so long as the individual knows what he is doing and why he is doing it, and that so long as he is not doing it as an escape from anxiety, but as a conscious and "intelligent" form of self-expression, it is all right. Christianity agrees that it is important at all times to know our motives and reasons for action but goes farther by saying that mere "intelligent" self-expression is not enough and may be actually destructive. It says that if we cannot control and sublimate and channel our sex drives, along with our other drives, we have contributed to the weakening of our character and personality. Christianity insists that the most creative purpose of sex is the expression of deeply married love and the propagation of children. And if this cannot be had, to sublimate this energy into creative enterprises is the next best purpose. But anything less than this, Christianity believes to be a misuse of sex and essentially egotistic and selfish. To say that such an ideal is impossible for the average person is to say that there is no use trying at all and to condone even obvious forms of degenerate behavior. From the Christian viewpoint, this is one of the serious errors in modern psychiatry. For the psychiatrist sees an average insecure person with few opportunities of creative self-expression and high happiness. He then proceeds to help the person adjust himself to a mediocre existence and environment. Here the theory is to get rid of any too great ambitions or desires—since they probably can't be fulfilled and therefore would cause him frustration. In their place, more easily obtained goals and desires are brought to the fore. This is nearly the equivalent of saying that one should not strive for too much, since he probably won't get it. It is better to struggle for a little and get it. This theory is thus essentially pessimistic and from the Christian view an error

—not because it is pessimistic, but because it leaves out an area of human nature—the spiritual area. It is the Christian faith that man will never be truly and creatively "adjusted" until his total self is "adjusted" to God. "That soul is restless until it finds its rest in God."* Psychiatric adjustment is both necessary and good. Its error is not in what it does, but in what it does not do. It does not go far enough. It does not adjust the spiritual side of man. This is the province of religion. There is, therefore, no necessary conflict between religion and psychiatry here. There is no conflict with the *practice* of psychiatry. The conflict appears only when some doctor asserts the doctrine that psychological adjustment is enough, all-inclusive, and complete, and that all other factors are irrelevant. Therefore, in the problem of sex conduct, religion would agree with the psychiatric answer if sex were merely a biological and psychological problem. But since it is also a spiritual problem, a problem involving self-love and objective love, we have to account for it in our therapy.

Furthermore, even in sociological terms, it can be demonstrated that when widespread unrestrained sexual behavior occurs, there is a serious disruption and let-down in the general character of society and *vice versa.* This is clearly evidenced in the immediate post-war period where new highs were reached in juvenile delinquency, divorce, crimes of passion, murder, etc. This situation is by no means over today. Regardless of whether people indulge in "playing around" from supposedly "intelligent" understanding, the fact still remains that such conduct undermines the stability of marriage, home, family, moral values, and creative ideals and indeed threatens the very order of society. This situation is a good example of the anarchy which follows the lifting of all restraints and it is difficult to see how this kind of anarchy can be justified by an appeal to intelligent self-expression. It is difficult to see how marriage and the family can be preserved if there are no limits to the sexual conduct of

*Augustine, *Confessions,* Book I, Chap. I.

husband and wife. It is difficult to see how preparation for marriage can include unrestrained sexual behavior before marriage.

This leads to the Christian concept of marriage and the family. Here again appears a conflict between secular thought and Christianity. Most secular thought today regards marriage as a sometimes happy convenience, and a family as a necessary addition for those who want children. Marriage has nothing to do with religion. It concerns itself with the physical and psychological factors of individuals. Therefore, if the marriage is not compatible, dissolve it and try somebody else. Thus, to walk in and out of marriage is to be intelligent and frank. Hollywood has developed this view to the extreme in its movies. Marriage is strictly a convenience with an overtone of sentimentality. It is a kind of romantic little game where one takes a fancy to someone, marries him. Shortly, another fancy appears for someone else. Hence, you get a divorce, and marry the next person. Here, the basis of marriage is egoistic satisfaction—marrying a person for what he or she can do to aid one's private desires and ego pattern. The responsibilities of marriage and parenthood and their accompanying trials, anxieties, and troubles are lost in the glamour of soft lights, luxurious apartments, gay adventures, and easy wealth. Children are regarded as infringing on one's freedom and romance. Thus, if troubles and responsibilities appear, these are regarded as inconvenient—sufficient grounds for divorce. Such is a fair caricature of our modern view of marriage. Christianity holds to a different view. It does not deny in any way all the romance, adventure, and gaiety that are present in courtship and marriage. This is all to the good when it is based on deeper foundations. By itself it is artificial; based on more profound factors it is a creative expression of this foundation which is love. Marriage, therefore, is not a convenience but a highly intimate and complex relationship. It is a relationship which calls for a radical change in the character of husband and wife. The change required is the change from self-love to objective love, from con-

cern of one's own ego-pattern to genuine concern and affection for the other person, for his or her own sake. Because this is the same problem, on perhaps a different level, as that of conversion, Christianity says that marriage must be based on religion. Religion is necessary because it enables us to overcome our selfishness, our self-love, and thereby helps us to love creatively, objectively. And this is the central problem of marriage. For in marriage, the biggest problem of adjustment is the adjustment of two conflicting egos. The husband is inclined to live his life according to his desires and demands. So is the wife. These desires and demands, with their ego patterns, will often conflict. One wants no children or only one, the other wants three or four. One wants to go to the movies tonight, the other is too tired. One thinks this business deal is on the level, the other thinks it is shady. One unconsciously is making the child too much into his own image, the other protests against such tyranny. These and a thousand other conflicts appear in marriage. How shall they be resolved? Some try to solve it by the dictator theory: the husband rules that he is the "boss," it is the man's job to be head of the house, what he says goes. This is obviously egoistic tyranny. The wife is ignored, not genuinely loved. She is merely the servant of the boss's desires and demands. This is the same attitude which, before marriage, asserts that it is all right for a man to play around, but it is not all right for women. This is the arrogant male double standard of morality—one set of rules for superior men; another set for the inferior women. This was widespread during the war when many soldiers overseas thought it quite right for them to "fraternize" with German, French, and English. But if their wives or sweethearts fraternized "with some 4-F back home" the soldiers would cry out in protest. "They can't do this to me." The answer is simple. Why not? They are persons too. You're doing it to them. God is no respecter of persons. Moral laws apply to all people equally and without exception.

Another solution to the conflicts in marriage is to get a divorce. And herein we come to the reason why Christianity does not look with favor on divorce. From the Christian point of view, divorce is the admission of a failure. The failure to solve the problem of selfishness. Divorces occur for many reasons—the real reasons and the good and not so good reasons. But fundamentally, the basic cause is the problem of self-love. One or both parties were not able genuinely to love each other. Their ego conflicts were too great and they would not admit, face, and attempt to quell their egotism. Of course, religion recognizes other causes for divorce. But in the majority of cases it is asserted that the fault lies with the selfishness of the individuals themselves. They have failed. They may have married in haste and by and for false motives, hasty and superficial understanding. They may have overlooked in their romantic courtship, psychological and biological factors, too few identities of interest. Perhaps they were ignorant of the responsibilities and problems of marriage or of sex. To admit ignorance hurts their pride. These and other facts are all, in part, expressions of egotism. It takes two to make a marriage and two to break it up. Divorce is a tragic failure. So what shall be our attitude towards divorce? "Heigh ho, that marriage didn't work, let's try again." Such an attitude reveals that the divorcé did not learn anything from his tragedy. He just blamed it on his partner and refused to see that he was at least partly responsible too. Christianity is not so much interested in pronouncing a moral judgment upon divorce as in trying to help people understand the causes for divorce and helping to reform and change so that the marriage can be saved. Jesus (or the Church) set the ideal when he said that, except in case of adultery, no divorce should be had, and no one should marry a divorcée. Here is the ideal set up by the Church. It recognizes that marriage is not a convenience but something ultimate and sacred. Therefore, it should not be taken lightly. Divorce is failure. And if failure of this or any kind is not faced then we are running away from

reality, from our problems. Divorce is, therefore, an escape from our own failure, or an attempt at it. Christianity calls our attention to this fact that tries to help us prevent that failure or, if we have already failed, to amend it and solve it. Therefore, the Church is not too eager to approve easy divorces any more than society is ready to approve or forgive lawbreakers.

However, Christianity recognizes that all of us fall short of the ideal and that ofttimes, in spite of sincere efforts, we do fail. This is true in marriage, too. It may well be, and often is the case, that one party to a marriage has sincerely tried to solve the problems while the other has stubbornly refused to do so. The stubborn partner may have committed adultery. If so, the other partner is not held responsible and since there is no further chance of reconciliation, divorce is advisable. Of course, the offending party may not commit actual physical adultery. It may be a spiritual kind of adultery—which is to say, a cessation of real love for the partner and a desire for someone else. It seems to me consistent not to give a too literal interpretation of Jesus' statement on adultery, particularly when He called attention to the "adultery with her in his heart" (*cf.* Mat. 5:28). In other words, Christianity recognizes grounds for divorce. These grounds are essentially those in which self-love is so strong as to eliminate the presence of genuine love. Adultery is regarded as a rather clear sign that objective love is dead. Other forms of self-love are not always as clear. This is why Churches today still recognize grounds for divorce other than mere physical adultery. But they lay down no other flat law because without personal knowledge it cannot be fairly determined whether the conflict is due to that reason or not. That is why many Churches hold to the sole law of adultery, yet also include the opportunity of personal interview with a Church authority. But what is important is that Christianity insists that marriage is a very great experience and a very great responsibility. And that, because it involves so centrally the adjustment of egos, religion is the neces-

sary foundation. Moreover, divorce should be regarded as only the last and tragic solution to the conflicts in marriage, not the convenient and easy way out. Our religion fully recognizes the error of not getting a divorce and pretending that love is in bloom when it is not. Many people do not get a divorce for fear of social or religious censure. Their love is long since dead. Their marriage is now a vast pretense and it is a kind of living hell. If children are present, it is very bad for them—for the atmosphere is tense, insecure, and utterly lacking in affection. This sort of pretense and masque is wrong. At the same time, easy and quick and unrepentant divorces also play havoc with children. Thus, for the married couple's own sake and for the children's sake, Christianity is against easy and quick divorces, and is very strongly in favor of lasting marriages based on religion. It does not deny that many marriages are reasonably happy without religion. But it believes that in addition to saving many marriages, it would make these "secular marriages" even better. This is often indicated by many non-religious couples who get married and scoff at religion, yet when children appear suddenly find themselves becoming "interested" in religion and sending them to Sunday School. But the primary reason why religion is so necessary to marriage is to meet the problem of self-love which is so inimical to a really happy and creative marriage. Christianity offers us the ideal of marriage, but, more important, it offers us the power to love.

In the problem of courtship and boy-girl relations, the fundamental issue is the same—the conflict of self-love and objective love. We have pointed out the common tendency to date a girl not for what she is, but for what she can do for your ego. The same, of course, holds true for girls. To be popular is to be taken out frequently by the handsomest fellows in town. Most of the adolescent nonsense of dating, clothes and slang fads, conceit, "lines," "techniques" and strategies—playing off one girl or man against another, infatuations, etc., are normal and healthy mani-

festations of growing vitality. And if not carried too far, they are relatively harmless and pleasant. But by the time young people reach the ages of eighteen to twenty, this sort of thing should begin to diminish and be replaced by more real love. Maturity in love is the achievement of the ability to love a person for his or her sake without benefit of artificial techniques and strategies. Maturity is the art of genuine love. Therefore, the ages of eighteen to twenty-five are the critical years for most young people because it is here that the struggle from adolescence to maturity is the most intense and difficult. It is here that the basic problem of self-love and real love is most acute. It is here that men and women choose their life partners—courtship begins. It is important, therefore, that we pay attention to the conditions which make for a successful courtship and a happy marriage.

Here again, Christianity offers us some helpful insights. As elsewhere, it points up our selfishness and egotism, calls attention to our motives and rationalizations. It states the necessity of being honest with oneself and making sure we understand the great need of caring for persons as they are, not for what we might like them to become or for what they can do to bolster our self-esteem. The broad ethical principles of love and justice apply here as elsewhere. These principles mean that toying around with another person's feelings for the sake of private enjoyment is out of order because it is neither an expression of love nor just to the person. All the adolescent techniques and "lines" are not consistent with a mature affection for someone because they are artificial substitutes for the "real thing"—love. This does not mean that romantic and sentimental actions such as the giving of flowers, long-distance calls, surprise visits, unusual adventures, are ruled out—quite the contrary, these can be valid expressions of love. What is important is not to confuse clever techniques and methods with love. That is, most young people think that love can be produced by the "right approach,"

the "clever spiel," etc. This sort of thing may actually hinder the response. Love appears in response to what the total personality is and whether it is capable of loving in return. Love does not respond merely to a technique or line. Conceit indicates self-love and therefore tends to repel real love from another person. Thus, when one becomes of age, he or she should know the difference between artificial methods and legitimate romantic expressions of love.

On the matter of sex (as has been stated), Christianity is against having sexual intercourse before marriage, regardless of whether a couple is engaged or not. The reasons for this position are similar to those given earlier in this chapter. Sexual intercourse is the most intimate expression of love and the biological means of the propagation of children. The marriage ceremony is the official religious and secular recognition that two people are in love and have decided to live their lives together. Every step prior to marriage is considered as preparation for this adventure. Intimate and deep love does not occur in relatively frequent dates, gay weekends and parties. It occurs only in daily living, the sharing of responsibilities, interests, problems, "in sickness and in health," in tragedy, in happiness. While many moderns regard the marriage ceremony as a mere formality, actually there is a vast difference between courtship, engagements—and the actual living together night and day. In courtship, people put their best selves forward, most meetings are consciously gay and romantic, responsibilities are few; life is gay and easy. But once married, one cannot merely put his best self forward. Husband and wife soon discover each other completely—when they are irritable and tired, fussy and cranky. Weaknesses are no longer hidden beneath soft lights. New responsibilities arise that were not present before —the job of making a living, of working out a family budget—how much can we afford for entertainment, clothes, vacations, etc.? Children—when and how many? Disappointments at the office, troubles with the neighbors, and so on. This constant shar-

ing of things—good, bad and indifferent—is radically different from the relatively carefree courtship. Sex is intimately bound up with this marriage experience. Christianity believes that since sexual intercourse is the most intimate emotional expression of love it should be reserved for the most intimate situation of love —which is marriage. Another reason for this view is that sexual intercourse which may occur during courtship is more the result of undisciplined emotion and passion than an expression of mature love. It is essentially self-love again. There are also certain psychological dangers involved. From the point of view of the woman, she may have an unconscious fear of having a child. This may cause her to hold back during the act. This results in less satisfaction than was anticipated and may thereby cause anxiety about potency or compatibility. From the man's point of view, his inability to control and restrain his sex emotions may result in lack of satisfaction for both the girl and himself. Since timing and rhythm are so important in this act and since it is usually the man who must restrain himself, it is necessary that he display and gain self-control and sex mastery. This sort of power is greatly weakened by promiscuous sex behavior. This power is most easily gained as a result of love whenever one has great feelings of tenderness, concern for the other's emotional satisfactions, ability to understand the variable rhythms of a woman's sexual and emotional responses. This is best understood and achieved in marriage only. And ofttimes because young people have a too ecstatic idea of sexual intercourse, their first experience, especially when not married, is often a deep disappointment which may cause anxiety or guilt feelings. Their ignorance, their clumsiness, their lack of mature love and intimate tenderness and understanding precludes a really satisfactory experience. Thus, Christianity believes that sexual intercourse should be reserved for the state of marriage only. The basic answer to the problem of marriage, like that of almost every other problem, is the ability to overcome self-love and to obtain

real love. Because in male and female relationships, this love can only be attained at its maximum in marriage, its maximum expression is centered there. Anything less than that involves less satisfaction and less genuine love and may actually hinder the process of mature love. The ethical problem in marriage, and premarital and normal boy-girl relationship, is the same basic problem of overcoming one's selfishness, of learning how to master and direct and control creative energies, of learning how to love objectively, of finding creative expressions and attitudes which express that love. The decisions that appear in these problems are particularly difficult precisely because they involve our deepest emotions. That is why mere advice or laws will not really provide much help at this point. Here again, we see that our ethical decisions as to how we shall act sexually, romantically, realistically, justly, sincerely, are not simply questions of ideals and laws, but also religious questions: the religious questions of how we can make the change from adolescent self-love to a mature and objective love.

A word should be said here of why Christianity believes that religion should be the basis of marriage, the family, and the home. As has already been hinted, religion is essential because it is the best guide to overcoming self-love and enabling a person to achieve the power of objective and creative love. This factor alone is a necessary condition for a happy marriage. But in a broader sense, religion is important for this reason: it is often true that a family lives too much unto itself. Its members live only unto themselves and therefore tend to lead a life which soon becomes narrow, smug, and decreases in creative growth. This has all the faults of any kind of isolationism. Religion breaks down this stifling wall and tends to direct the energies of the family outside themselves. Just as it is more healthy for an individual personality to have his interests and energies directed to realities outside himself, the same is true about a family. If all its energies and drives and interests are centered solely on itself,

it leads to conflicts, irritations and so on to boredom and stagnation. If the family is united in its interests on things outside of themselves, they are drawn closer together and are more creative, display more vitality and growth, and their common interests and responsibilities tie them closer together yet keep them from being too narrow.

The family is not God, and marital isolationism, like national isolationism, is unhealthy and irresponsible. Christianity breaks down this isolationism and unites the family with the rest of life. And only as the family is united with creative reality can it grow, mature, and achieve true happiness.

In closing this chapter, it must be said that the discussion of marriage and sex has been limited almost entirely to the religious emphasis or point of view. This should not be interpreted as asserting that religion is all that matters in marriage and courtship. It is assumed that other factors are of equal importance. Psychological, economic, and biological conditions and problems are of essential importance, too. There are many excellent books written by competent authorities in these fields and they should be read and understood by young people—and old people! The religious point of view has been emphasized here for two reasons: first, because this is a book about religion and its relation to life, and secondly, because too often the Christian view is either misunderstood or regarded as irrelevant. And it might be said here that Christianity does not claim to solve all problems in this or in any other field. For example, if there is a genuine psychological difficulty threatening a courtship or marriage it is not the province of religion to try to cure some deep-seated neurosis. That is the field of psychiatry. Christianity presupposes normal people. It starts with normal people and tries to help them to be more creative. If a man is sick—physically or mentally—religion and its ministers are not qualified to operate —that is the function of the doctors. When a doctor of any kind lays down laws about right and wrong, the meaning and purpose

of life, he is no longer scientific, he is no longer a doctor in the strict sense of the word. While he is entitled to give his philosophy and ideas on these matters he has no right to claim that such views are scientific and medically true. Similarly, if ministers should expound on how to cure appendicitis, cancer, various types of psychoses and neuroses, they are entitled to their opinions but they cannot claim that such ideas are religious or Christian. The major portions of the enterprises of medicine, psychiatry, science, and religion have no essential conflict. The precise line of where one ends and the other begins has not yet been determined. Therefore, differences in view about many personal problems remain. Arrogance and extremists in both religion and medicine make for unnecessary conflict and hinder co-operative inquiry in discovering the complementary nature and guidance of religion and science. The encouraging sign today is that the best minds in religion and psychiatry are coming closer together in their handling of personal problems; each recognizing more and more the necessity and value of the other's insights. For this reason, the improvement of personal relationships, particularly marriage, seems to me to be on the way.

3

PERSONAL ETHICS IN ONE'S COMMUNITY AND LIFE

WE NOW come to a large area of life in which personal conduct is primarily determined by one's own personal ethics with relatively little guidance by social custom and law. This area might be defined as the little but important things in life. And it is precisely these little things which contribute very greatly to the status of one's whole character and attitude. And it is in these little things that personal ethics plays a significant rôle. What are some of these "little things," apparently insignificant actions, thoughts, and attitudes? Among them are these: how do we act towards our friends, towards the janitor in the building, the soda fountain clerk, the policeman, the shopkeeper—our neighbors? Do we regard some people as inferior because they have more menial jobs than we? Do we snub some people, envy others? How much do we gossip and tell tales on our friends and neighbors? Do we regard shopkeepers or servants—public or private—as inferior and treat them as slaves? How often do we hurt people by unkind remarks, careless and thoughtless deeds? Do we respond to people's needs grudgingly or willingly? Do we seek credit and praise for our "good deeds" or do we do them as a matter of course without seeking to exploit and magnify them for our prestige? How many "smart" short-cuts do we get away with in our studies and examinations? Do we resent criticism or accept it graciously and proceed to act upon it seri-

ously? Are we smug and content, or do we recognize our selfishness and weakness and try to improve ourselves, to grow, and mature? Do we seek childish and exciting escapes from our inner anxieties and problems, or do we wrestle with them honestly and courageously? These and similar daily problems constitute a large part of our life. There is very little social or external pressure and guidance for us here. What we do is essentially our responsibility and a matter of personal ethics. These are the little things which "don't matter," which "few people notice," which are "easy to get away with." But actually they are the things which make us what we are, mold our character, fix our habits.

It is in this area that Christian ethics is very important because it calls attention to our character and its expression in these daily little things. From the Christian point of view, each one of these small deeds is an important symptom or expression of one's inner stature. These symptoms are signals to tell us how we are doing, whether we are maturing and becoming creative, or whether we are still selfishly adolescent, or just stagnating—arrested development. Take gossip, for example; we are all guilty of it to some degree. And it is a danger signal. For gossip is one of the cruelest and most subtle forms of egotism. It is a kind of mental crucifixion of someone else. By tearing down someone else, we thereby in comparison seem to build ourselves up. This is often the real motive behind gossip, and is often allied with envy, jealousy, hatred and other destructive attitudes. Gossip is devilish because we clothe our barbs with faint praise. "He's a wonderful fellow but did you know that he . . ." "I don't believe in talking behind someone's back, but I'm sure she would not mind if I told you about . . ." And so we proceed to rip somebody apart. Another example of a little thing is the great concern some people show for destitute people in faraway lands but utterly ignore unfortunate people in their own neighborhood. It is so easy, with a great flourish, to write out a contribution

for China relief, but much more difficult to take some food downtown or help somebody get a job in your own community. The first procedure requires no effort or time and receives much acclaim. The second procedure involves much effort and time and trouble and little acclaim. Or, many people are concerned about the treatment of refugees and war victims but treat their servants and shopkeepers as if they were dirt. Still another example, many students take short-cuts in their work, or try to pull "fast ones" in their papers and exams. If this gets to be a habit, later on in life these same people will be pulling "fast ones," shady deals in business, and then wondering why there is "government interference" which seeks to protect people from illegitimate practice. It is something like soldiers overseas who did a lot of business "on the side" in getting cameras, radios, watches, etc., and then returned and chaffed at OPA and Better Business Bureau policies of fair play.

Christian ethics acts here as a "gadfly" to our conscience. It lays down no precise rules of what to say or think or do in this and that particular situation. It provides us with the broad general principles of love and justice in our relations with people, of "loving our neighbors"—treating them with respect and as persons of worth and dignity. Our religion calls for repeated self-examination and awareness of our motives, attitudes and habits. It makes us aware of the importance of these "little things." What we do from day to day is often more important than an occasional great deed or great sin. For the chances are that how we decide our little ethical decisions will probably determine how we decide a really crucial problem. Every act in life, from the Christian viewpoint, is important. For in every decision we make we illustrate the type of character we possess. Every decision is an important step in our growth or decay, a triumph or a defeat for our growing up, our maturing. And yet it is in this area that our freedom and responsibility are the most intense and broad. Since there are no particular and pre-

cise rules, we are free to apply the broad Christian principles. Through Christ, we are offered the insight as to the kind of persons we ought to become, but just how and by what daily practical methods we work for this end are our responsibility and freedom. The purpose of personal ethics is to bring to our attention the fact that all "little" personal attitudes, thoughts and deeds have ethical and religious significance. Though such little things often seem to have no relation to religion and though we often think that these things are our own private affair, Christianity insists that religion applies to these things as well. In our zeal for social action, we often forget the importance of personal ethics. These things are very important precisely because they help determine our whole character and conversely our whole character helps determine what we do in these little deeds. This is the real meaning behind Jesus' parable of the tree and the fruit (see Luke 13:6). We are "judged by our fruits"—the little everyday acts that all of us do advertise pretty clearly what kind of persons we are. At the same time, mere attention to external deeds, the fruit, is not enough. Therefore, the source of the fruit is important—the tree. It is our inner character which determines the character of the fruit. If the tree (character) is good, the fruit will be good. Thus, the answer to the question as to how one can do good is that one can do good only when he *is* good. Thus, in personal ethics we reach the same conclusion as we did in social ethics. To have strong personal ethics, in order to be able to do good in our personal life, we are necessarily forced to meet the religious problem of conversion. We must be changed and transformed from a relatively self-centered and selfish person to a mature unselfish person who is able to love objectively. Personal ethics, then, like social ethics, is dependent upon religion. What we *are* determines what we will *do*.

4

THE CHURCH

THUS far in our discussion of Christian ethics we have treated the problems almost entirely in terms of how an individual makes ethical decisions. Perhaps not a few readers have supposed that this covers the problem of right motive and right action. And indeed the book has purposely been pointed towards the individual reader. However, it would be a serious mistake to imagine that Christian ethics is purely a matter of personal decision. Christians cannot be isolated individuals making ethical decisions separated from other persons and other Christians. Why this is so we shall try to demonstrate in the following paragraphs on the Church.

We cannot here treat the subject of the Church in all its many aspects. Contrary to much public opinion, the Church is inseparably related to the problem of ethics and it is this relation which concerns us now. To be sure, many people regard the Church today as an actual barrier to ethical activity. They point out with much evidence and justification the conservatism of the Church, its failure to speak out on many important issues, its tardiness in supporting liberal policies in all fields, its preoccupation with minor evils like excessive drinking, while it neglects larger evils of racism and economic injustice. Further, popular views of the Church often conclude that its function is largely worship, solace, and "other spiritual administrations." Unfortunately, all these criticisms and many more are quite true. The

Church stands guilty on all counts. And yet this is not the whole story.

The Church, like all other institutions and organizations, has had its ups and downs, its periods of great vitality and vision, its years of weakness and sloth. It has been tremendously creative and shamefully destructive, but throughout all its history, these facts still remain clear and true. First, whatever good has been done by Christians has been done by Christian men and women through the Church. Even on the low level of practicality this should be clear. If a person wants to act on a problem with some effect, he can do better if he works through an organization. For example, if today a person feels it to be his ethical duty to help the hungry and the poor, his most practical method of action is to work through an institution. Suppose he tries to send food to some family in Europe. What family, where do they live, what do they need? It would take considerable time and effort to ascertain these facts on one's own. But there are many organizations which have the facts available, which have the means and methods of transportation and distribution. Therefore, it is much more practical and effective to use the services of such organizations. Similarly, the Church has always been at least one agency of relief.

Secondly, the Church has been the medium through which Christianity has survived and expanded. The Church collected and preserved the writings of the Bible; it formulated the Creeds in reply to serious attacks against the faith. Regardless of how we moderns may feel about the language of the Creeds, the historical fact remains that these Creeds kept the Church together. Further, the spread of Christianity over the globe was due to Christian missionaries—educated, financed and sent forth by the Church. Even today, any one of us who feels attracted by the Christian religion owes this to the Church. For it has preserved and carried on the Christian gospel and still offers it freely unto all who care to listen.

Thirdly, no isolated individual is wise enough and good enough to maintain this ethical sensitivity alone. All of us need to be refreshed, reinvigorated constantly. Left to ourselves, our ethical vigor diminishes, and gradually we sink into lethargy and frequently into action only when expediency demands it. Also, by ourselves, we cannot be informed adequately of all the facts necessary to make decisions, nor do we have sufficient understanding of much of the implications and meanings of our religion. One of the functions of the Church is to help us increase our understanding and application of Christianity. It also pricks our consciences, offers us guidance, and makes available to us the power to act resolutely. In short, we are like automobiles, to use a crude illustration. We need to have periodic check-ups, we need refueling in order to keep going with efficiency and with power.

Finally, it is a well-nigh inevitable conclusion from all that we have said about Christian ethics thus far that a Christian cannot live and act alone. Ethical isolation is a contradiction in terms. Our ethic is love, and certainly the very essence of love means community with other people. Isolation is impossible in all areas of life. Biologically and psychologically we grow only in so far as we live with other people. In childhood, we are utterly dependent upon other people for our knowledge, our food and shelter, for all the basic necessities of life. One man alone is no man at all. A one-man religion is no religion at all.

Christian ethics with its cardinal principle of love and responsibility impels us to associate with others in common endeavor. The Christian Church, once the character of love was made clear in Christ, was inevitable. Men have always banded together into an organization when they have been attracted by some great purpose and have shared together some rich experience. At its best, in history, the Church has always been an organization of men and women who have been drawn together by a common experience of God, a mutual concern for each other, an attrac-

tion to the person of Christ, and a dedication to what they understand to be the Will of God. In terms of ethics, we moderns have not understood fully what this can mean. Our rugged individualism has blinded us to the creative possibilities open to people banded together in a common cause. Only now are we learning, for example, from the recent Nazis and the contemporary Communists what terrific power can be exerted by a very few but closely knit group of people. We still do not appreciate the influence that can be welded by passionately dedicated men with common convictions. Some of us bewail the weakness of the Church and long to take effective action ourselves. But we despair because we say, "What can I, a single individual, do?" And the answer is, "Very little." This disheartens us. But when we stop here, we make our mistake. I, alone, can do very little, but I along with other like-minded and like-dedicated Christians, knit together by worship of the God we know through Christ, can do much. We moderns have hardly scratched the surface here. We have not begun to tap the powerful resources available in the Church. All too often we have attended church only with the idea of what can it do for me, what can I get out of it? We have entirely forgotten our Christian ethics—what can *we* Christian churchmen do for the Church, for our community, for people, for the world?

This does not mean that all Christians in the Church never differ, that they all vote the same way, that they all agree on particular policies in economics, etc. It means that there will be much difference and sharing of opinions. But there will be agreement on the goals to be achieved and there will be a common seeking and growing together. And where assent is possible there will be significant action. Where dissension exists, it need not be divisive, but rather a spur to more sharing and working together. The Church as an institution is not perfect and it never will be —nor is any other institution. But this is no reason for abandoning it. From the Christian point of view, it is all the more reason

for joining it and helping to improve it. The argument that the Church is too weak and evil to be worthy of joining is open to the charge of smug self-righteousness. If we understand and take seriously the ethics of love and responsibility we cannot help being part of the Church. Just as Christian ethics cannot be separated from the Christian religion, neither can it be separated from the Christian Church. To be a Christian is to be in the Church. To act ethically is to act together.

PART IV

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Power for Action

1

THE PROBLEM OF COMPROMISE

BEFORE we summarize Christian ethics, there is still a major problem of ethics which has not been mentioned. It is the problem of compromise. Throughout this book we have hinted at this problem by noting the difference between ideals and our attempts to realize those ideals in daily practice. In fact, we have stressed the point that in social ethics, no political or economic measure or movement ever perfectly represents an ideal. At best, they are imperfect approximations. In personal ethics also we saw that no man can claim to be perfect and act perfectly and righteously. As persons, we are imperfect and can only approximate perfection in our ethical actions. Indeed, we have emphasized the great danger involved when any one believes that they or their actions are perfect and without sin or error. Ethics is actually, therefore, responsible acting yet always something less than perfect and right. Several examples should make this clear. In the field of social ethics, when a person makes an ethical decision on, say, some political or economic policy, and then acts upon his decision, he inevitably fails to achieve the perfect solution. For how can a person foresee all the possible results of any given economic or political measure? One does not know enough to understand all the possible ramifications of a measure. He cannot look into the future and know all that will occur. Thus, a man may sincerely and from pure motives vote for some measure only to find that two years later that same measure is working

more harm than good. Does that make the man evil? Is he responsible for this "mistake"? Or, in personal ethics, a person comes to us seeking help and advice. From our real concern and love for this person and with the best of our knowledge and wisdom, we do the best we can for him. Yet, later on, we may well find out that our advice and help were exactly the wrong things to give. We were sincere and did our best, but because we do not know all the answers in life, do not always know the mysteries of another's personality and cannot foresee all possible situations, we cannot be sure our advice will work out successfully. When we happen to give the right help, shall we take pride in our wisdom and achievement? When we fail, are we guilty? Or, again, we may believe our motives pure, our judgments objective and try sincerely to act on them, but the fact remains that there is always a tinge of self-interest and selfishness in all of us which partly colors our decision—even if we are unaware of it. In fact, Christianity goes so far as to say outright that rarely, if ever, can a human being act from absolutely pure and objective motives and never can he be sure that any specific act is absolutely right and ideal. Moreover, no one can ever be sure that what he does will work out absolutely successfully and be the perfect realization of the ideal. We vote and work for this economic measure, that political policy, this international system of law, that social movement. We do all these things with as pure motives as possible, but there is self-interest in us which partly determines our judgments too. We cannot be sure whether the policies we supported will work out creatively or destructively. We can make "educated guesses," but there is no absolute guarantee beforehand that success is inevitable. Are we, then, guilty and responsible for whatever evils and failures occur? Does not this make the whole question of ethics a futile one? Indeed, if it is true, as Christianity asserts, that no man can ever be perfectly righteous and act from perfectly righteous and pure motives, or make absolutely true judgments and decisions; and

if it is true that all ethical actions and decisions are always less than the ideal, that they result inevitably in only relative goods and evils, imperfect approximations of the ideal and the right, does this not raise two very serious questions? One, does it not make it hopeless and useless for the individual to be ethical at all? Two, does not the virtual impossibility of achieving perfect ideals make all ethical striving futile? Let us answer the questions one at a time.

The first question involves our own personal character and attitude. It raises the problem of the extent to which we are guilty for our errors and wrongs, and the degree to which we are responsible for results which we could not possibly have foreseen. The situation is something like this: Christianity insists that we take responsible ethical action in all areas of life. A certain economic issue arises. As Christians we must take sides, decide and act upon it. Our religion prompts us to this responsibility and concern. It offers us the broad ideal of love and justice which help us to determine the issues of this economic measure. Our religion provides us with power to overcome in part our selfish interests, thereby enabling us to make a more objective judgment and decision than would otherwise be the case. So we study the measure and counter-measure as fairly as we can. But we soon discover that neither solution is perfect, that the real situation is choosing between two answers of only relative difference. One is only a little (relatively) better than the other. So we vote and support and work for the better one. This is what Christian ethics demands of us. But now we are faced with this problem of knowing that our judgment was as pure and objective as we could make it, but, since we are only human beings, we also should know that self-interest and narrowness were also present in spite of all our efforts to pretend that such was not the case. We also know that the economic measure was not perfect, that while there was much good in it, there was also some evil. So where do we stand?

Christianity replies that the awareness of the fact that, in spite of all sincere intentions and attempts at mastery of selfishness, these things were nevertheless present in our decision, is in itself a "saving grace." That is to say, this awareness is essentially the attitude of humility. If this humility is present in a man's character it prevents whatever selfishness he has from assuming a destructive rôle both in his character and his ethical actions. Destruction occurs when a man is not humble, when he believes that his decision and action are wholly right and perfect and that anyone who differs from him is wrong, is subversive and should be suppressed. Humility is the awareness that one's choice and action might be wrong and therefore that person is "open to suggestions" or is ever on the lookout for new changes and improvements. This is essentially a creative and dynamic attitude. Lack of humility is essentially intolerant, bigoted, radically powerful for a while but then reactionary and destructive because it cannot recognize the need for change and improvement, since it assumes that it is perfect and right. This attitude is essentially destructive. Humility, then, is the sign of wisdom and creativity and maturity in character. This is why Jesus put so much emphasis on it. And it should be clear that humility does not mean timidity, groveling in the dust before someone, or the hesitation to act. Quite the contrary, it means resolute action but with readiness to indulge in new and corrective action. It is a kind of discontent with the present. It is the awareness that ourselves and all of life are less than perfect and therefore must continually strive for more perfection. Christianity says that when a man is humble, recognizes that his judgments and actions are not without sin, and therefore seeks to improve his integrity and objectivity, he is "forgiven" and not condemned. That is to say, a man is not held to be guilty and judged as evil because he did his best, even though it was not perfect. If a man acts from the best intentions and motives of which he is capable and is aware that his best is not perfect, that man is "accounted as

righteous." He is not perfectly righteous in comparison with God and Christ, but he is accounted *as if* he were that way because he is living up to his best capabilities. This is called "justification by faith." Our actions and ethical conduct are not justified or judged merely by their effects or results in the arena of life. As we saw in an earlier chapter, our character and stature cannot be truly judged by our deeds alone. A man is not bad or good merely because of his actions. Therefore, we are *not* justified by our works. We are justified by our motives, our intentions, our character, our beliefs, our faith. It should be obvious that one cannot be held guilty for failing to achieve something which by definition he cannot achieve. By definition we cannot be without sin and finitude; by definition we cannot be actually perfect. Therefore, God will not condemn us because we fail to be perfect. But He will judge us for the failure to admit our imperfection, the failure to be humble. Christ's injunction "You . . . must be perfect" (Mat. 5:48) is not the advice for us to be something we cannot be. It is the exhortation to keep striving and working *towards* perfection because of the fact that we are not perfect and can never be in the smug position of assuming that we are and thereby ceasing to live and struggle. Thus, if we are aware of our sin and finitude, if we sincerely try to overcome our self-love by conversion and thereby grow in mature love, if we sincerely try to express this love concretely and objectively and thereby follow God's will for us, we are accounted as righteous. This is justification by faith. We are forgiven, justified by faith, faith that this is the nature of God's will for us, the real meaning of life—to act responsibly and resolutely knowing that we fall short of the ideal, but that in the very striving for this ideal we fulfill our destiny and contribute powerfully in a creative way. The answer, then, is a paradoxical one. We are guilty for our imperfect ethical decisions and we are not. We are guilty in terms of the actual state of our character and the effects of our deeds, but we are not guilty in so far as we have

acted from the best of our motives and intentions and are aware that our best is not good enough. When this awareness is present we are then relieved of responsibility for our guilt. We are released from guilt. We are justified.

This means that we do not have to waste time bemoaning our ethical deeds, spending time trying to atone for them, wailing about our helplessness and the futility of acting at all, seeking magic formulas for forgiveness, and being fearful of acting again for fear that we will be guilty all over again. Justification by faith is precisely that which enables us and urges us to further action and ethical responsibility. Again, the very nature of humility and the forgiveness present in justification by faith—God's grace—release us from guilt and provide the incentive to be more forthright and responsible in our action. "Be ye perfect" —keep striving, living precisely because we are not perfect. The very struggle to mature, to grow, to experience real love and express it in action is in itself good and self-fulfilling. Not to make ethical decisions, not to participate in life are to stagnate and die.

In addition to justification by faith, at the same time there can occur and should occur what is called sanctification. What this means is what we described in conversion. We saw that man cannot improve his spiritual stature by his own efforts alone. We cannot master our sin and self-love by our own will or reason or by New Year's resolutions. Only God's power can help here. Therefore, sanctification means the entrance of God's power and love in our life. Our surrender to Him involves His empowering us to love more objectively. Our pilgrimage towards perfection and the realization of various degrees of creative love and maturity are made possible by God's love and power in us. As we learn to surrender more and more of ourselves to Him, so we receive more and more of His power or spirit, or grace, or the ability to love. This process we described in conversion is also known as sanctification. We are sanctified, which is to say, we are made more and more perfect, made better, are enabled to

love more readily, be more objective, etc. The reason why neither justification alone nor sanctification alone is not enough should be clear. If we are merely justified by faith we shall soon become callous and lack humility. We shall not act ethically and we shall then ignore our errors by merely saying. "Oh, well, you can't expect me to be perfect. I did the best I could, so nobody can blame me. I'm only human, you know. What do you expect?" This attitude soon degenerates into listless and careless action and actually results in the lessening of ethical sensitivity and activity. Therefore, this attitude and justification by faith need to be supplemented by the dynamic factor of sanctification—a constant struggle and improvement which result in more growth of our ethical sensitivity and will to action. Or, if sanctification is taken alone, it results in concern only for one's purity and righteousness and growth. Here attention is paid only to one's relation to God and one's own spiritual growth. Ethical action is avoided consciously or unconsciously because it tends to involve one in the mud and evil of life. This, in turn, would seem to hinder one's spiritual righteousness. Thus, emphasis on sanctification alone results in the lessening of ethical responsibility. Therefore, justification by faith must be added so as to keep a person active in ethical problems. This problem is very similar to the problem of the relation between ethics and religion. If the two are divorced, they soon become useless and inadequate. If kept together they become strong and virile and relevant to life.

2

OTHER ALTERNATIVES

THESE doctrines of justification by faith and sanctification may seem difficult or even something akin to double-talk. But if we examine other alternatives we shall see that, though not easy, these two doctrines meet the problem squarely. Other alternatives try to answer the problem this way: One solution which may be called the humanist position asserts that with sufficient education and rationality a man can be objective and so make enlightened and intelligent decisions. As we saw earlier, this view does not account for the stubborn fact of sin and self-interest; it imagines that self-interest can be overcome by education and knowledge. And such is not the case. This humanist view actually results in the negation of ethical responsibility in the following ways: It may lead to self-righteousness because it assumes that we are more free of self-interest than we really are, and because it tends to identify its causes and issues with truth and the ideal, and fails to see how these causes fall short of the ideal, and at times actually are against the ideal. And, as we shall see later, ethical vigor lasts only so long as a movement or cause succeeds. When it becomes apparent that a particular issue is failing, humanist ethics either gives up in despair or becomes stubborn and reactionary. Humanist systems of ethics have no doctrine of sin and therefore no doctrine of responsibility and guilt. To the humanist a person is either intelligent or he is ignorant. He is either right or wrong. If it is admitted that in most ethical deci-

sions there is not an absolutely right or wrong issue, the humanist tendency is either to pretend that there is or to wait until there is such a clear-cut choice. This means either self-deception and self-righteousness, or lack of ethical action. That is why humanist ethics eventually produce either self-righteous perfectionism or despairing cynicism. Many great humanist movements have started out with great ideals and great vitality only to end up with most of its supporters cynical and disillusioned, and a few desperately clinging to the belief that they are still right and perfect and that everybody else is wrong. This phenomenon is well evidenced in such movements as rationalism in philosophy, capitalism in politics, social reform movements, moral rearmament in morals, the war to end war in the 1917–1920's, etc.

Another solution is often found in some religions. Here it is asserted that ethics is a matter of law. Things are right and wrong and are clearly defined by some religious or church system of laws. Therefore, there is never any question of choice between relative goods and evils. The primary function of man is to make sure that he is holy himself. Emphasis is put on sanctification. What ethical participation there is is clearly defined. Moreover, the performance of well-defined good deeds will contribute to one's holiness. Do good, then God will reward or save you. Do good, then you will become righteous. From the Christian point of view, this puts the cart before the horse. It assumes that good deeds will make a good character, but the reverse is true. Further, this view divides life into too simple check lists of vices and virtues. In so doing it tends to concentrate on minor ethical problems like drinking, smoking, swearing—while ignoring the larger and more difficult ethical problems of economics, politics, etc. It also tends towards self-righteousness because it imagines that holiness can be achieved by the performance of a few easy good deeds. This view is essentially the legalist and perfectionist view—which we saw leads to reactionary dogmatism and ethical irresponsibility. This attitude has been present, unfortunately, in

Christianity. It is this false attitude which has been largely responsible for the Church's inactivity in social and political problems. For this view regards politics and economics as a complex and evil conglomeration of problems. Therefore, no clear-cut definitions were possible. The whole area was regarded as not a spiritual problem and therefore not a concern of religion. In some denominations it was excused on the basis that the state and its problems and powers are ordained of God and therefore authoritative. Since the state represents God's order for society, the Church need not interfere or concern itself with God's work. This, obviously, is a perversion of Christianity and cannot claim to be in the historical religion of Jesus and the Apostles. The whole prophetic tradition of the Bible is a flat denial of this view. For if the prophets said nothing else they most certainly proclaimed over and over again that any and all states are under the judgment of God, that religion is and must always be the critic of the state, that it is the responsibility of the Christian citizen to act as a Christian in his state and all its problems. Failure to do so is failure to be ethically and religiously responsible. Because large sections of the German Protestant and Catholic Churches held to this sanctification and legalist view, many people in these Churches failed to act against the injustices of Nazism and by failing to act indirectly aided its rise to power by their default. When at last the Nazi evils became so monstrous and apparent, the Church faced the difficult choice of no resistance or virtual martyrdom. It is to their credit that so many did choose martyrdom, however late, rather than give in.

Thus, Christianity believes that it has the only creative and realistic solution to the problem of avoiding self-righteous radicalism and reactionism on the one hand, and cynical disillusionment and weakening of ethical vigor on the other hand. It believes that only through humility and its consequent forgiveness is one kept from arrogance and yet enabled to bear and face responsibility for inevitable mistake and failure, that only through

this humility can one achieve relative successes and triumphs without displaying pride and presuming that all work is now done, all problems solved, that only by justification by faith can one be humble yet resolute in action. Christianity believes at the same time that only through continual and dynamic sanctification can one progress towards genuine objectivity and love, control and master self-love and self-group interest, and that only as these two processes are combined and acted upon simultaneously and continuously, can ethical vigor, sensitivity and action remain constant, indeed, grow stronger.

3

SUCCESS AND FAILURE

THERE is also one other problem which should be mentioned. It is the problem of success and failure and its relation to ethics. Most ethical systems, particularly the widespread American secular view, are dependent upon success. The popular humanist view in America believes that ethics needs no religion, that people can be ethical without being religious. And many examples are cited, *i.e.*, hundreds of citizens in every community who are upright and respectable people, but who never go to church and are not interested in religion. It is significant that most of these people are well-off, are "successful" in life. It is also pointed out that many great social and political reform movements display terrific ethical zeal, yet they could hardly be called religious. And such movements have done much good. Therefore, this humanist view asserts that ethical action is independent of the "superstitious dogmas" of religion. We saw in a previous chapter why this view is in error, *i.e.*, it fails to account for sin and self-interest in human nature and imagines problems are more simple than they really are. But there is another fatal weakness in this view and one which centers our attention on the important ethical problem of success and failure.

"Nothing succeeds quite so well as success" is an old statement. But its opposite is equally true. "Nothing fails quite so badly as failure." Various kinds of humanist ethics illustrate these two statements, though they are inclined to ignore the second

part. It is quite true that powerful ethical action is often generated in humanist movements of all kinds. The vast social reform movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were largely humanist movements. Although some of them, like the Industrial Revolution in England, were started by Christian people, their large support and vitality were derived from large bodies of people who were not connected with religion. Communism is a movement, thoroughly secular and humanist, which began as a legitimate protest against an unjust economic system. The Communist movement displayed tremendous ethical power and vitality in the field of economic and political reform. No sacrifice was too great for its adherents. Indeed, almost anywhere in history one can find powerful ethical movements for progress and reform; movements which were primarily ethical without being religious. They had vitality and power, they affected much-needed reforms, did much good. Is this not proof, then, of the self-sufficiency of ethics quite apart from religion? On the surface it would seem so. But digging a little deeper should indicate the fatal weakness of humanist ethical systems. Thus, upon analysis of these movements we first admit their obvious display of ethical vigor and frequent good effects of their actions. But we must then go farther and note that this was true only so long as they were successful and triumphant. Whenever they ran into difficulties and it became apparent that failure was imminent, the majority of their supporters abandoned the movements and abandoned them in great despair and disillusionment. Of the few that remained, they usually became reactionary, frantically insisting that all is not lost, that they were "betrayed," that everybody else was wrong but not they. They then usually assume a perfectionist rôle whereby they will support only that measure or policy which perfectly represents the ideal or none at all. This result is clearly seen in the vast movement for peace and international co-operation in the 1920's. It was particularly clear in America. The large majority of Americans eagerly supported

the League of Nations and all the conferences and Peace Pacts which seemed to insure "lasting peace." Great was the ethical vigor, high were the hopes. When it became apparent that eternal peace and prosperity were not just around the corner and that all the old conflicts and rivalries were not solved, great was our disillusionment. We lost all ethical sensitivity and vitality, lost all hope and effort. We became bitter and cynical. We retreated into our isolationist shell and tried to pretend that it wasn't our fault, it was Europe's fault. So we decided to "let Europe stew in its own juice" while we remained a bastion for peace and prosperity. Let us, we said, remain aloof and build ourselves up as the model democracy and economy. Then Europe—that breeding place of wars—would look across the ocean and see what a wonderful country was America. Then, noting our righteousness, peace and plenty, Europe would say, "Let us stop our bickerings and conflicts and be like America." This was the fatuous and simple-headed belief of many Americans. Those who did not share this naïveté shared another equally ironic view, namely, that Europe would continue to squabble and fight. Therefore, let them fight and destroy themselves. It would make no difference to us; it was no concern of ours. We would continue to progress in our "splendid isolation." When Europe got tired of fighting one day, she would decide that it wasn't worth it and therefore imitate America. But whether she did or not, was of no concern to us. Thus, our tremendous ethical activity in the field of international relations turned into a bitter disillusionment which, in turn, resulted in almost complete irresponsibility, the destruction of ethical action and a degenerate self-righteousness and blindness which nearly cost us our very existence in 1941. So long as we believed that our movement for peace was succeeding, our ethical activity was strong. When failure appeared our ethical vigor died. Virtually all other similar movements in history suffered the same fate. In the late 1930's and early 1940 in America, there was the issue of whether we

should go to war against the Nazi aggression. Not a few people held the position that we should not go to war on the grounds that we could not win, would not succeed. Here the motive for ethical activity was not the essential question of right and wrong, but of success and failure. Or, again, other movements illustrate this point. In social reform or economic and political reform movements, people will support them so long as they appear to be succeeding and so long as it does not cost them too much. Many people will sacrifice something if they are sure their cause will win eventually. But few will sacrifice anything if they believe their cause is doomed to failure. Many social workers, after seeing the ignorance, filth and stupidity and selfishness of human beings, give up their social work because "What's the use? They don't want to be helped. We can't succeed." People will not support secular or religious missions unless they can be convinced that they are "practical, worth while, profitable," *i.e.*, successful. Thus, humanist ethics is essentially based on success. And since success is a fleeting and tenuous and oft-defeated state of affairs, popular support is equally fleeting and variable. In short, ethical vitality in humanism blows hot and cold. Now it is intense and strong, now it is weak and inactive. Now it has high hopes, noble resolutions, great action and plans; now it is cynical, bitter, inactive and disillusioned. This very fact proves that in spite of all rationalizations humanist ethics is essentially egoistic. Its real appeal and basis are "Take part in this noble cause because it will succeed." Indeed, some of the most powerful movements in history, Calvinism, Capitalism, Communism, Nazism, were powerful precisely because they believed that they would succeed. Indeed, they attracted people by trying to prove that success was predestined. Calvinism asserted that it was predestination, Capitalism said that it was a pre-established harmony, Communism says that it is economically determined, Nazism boasted that it would last for a thousand years. Here the appeal is made in terms of a success that is inevitable, "it's in the books,"

history is predestined to guarantee it, all is mechanistically assured. Therefore, millions of people support it because they want to succeed. So they hop on the bandwagon. But they hop off it when they find that history is *not* destined that way, when success is no longer guaranteed. Therefore, humanity's problems will never be solved by hot and cold ethical action. We may build a lot in our hot periods, but we also destroy a lot in our cold periods. If ethical activity is dependent upon success, it will be a very weak and ineffectual power. Because success implies and depends upon an egotistical basis, our periods of enthusiasm are almost inevitably periods of radical fanaticism which cause conflicts that produce either defeat or a new tyranny. This egotistic basis forgets the real problem and concern of ethics; it forgets what is right and wrong, creative and destructive. Instead, it presumes uncritically that its movement is of course wholly right and that what is really important is success. Therefore, when it fails, people fail to act. Thus, when a person says that we should not fight tyranny or social evils because we cannot win, he is ignoring the question of right and wrong and supinely accepting the triumph of evil and destruction. There is no *use* in resisting, he says. Humanism, therefore, is a good system of ethics when it is succeeding and when the problems and events of history are not too difficult or complex. It is comfortable and easy ethic for those who live in relatively safe security. But it is an utter failure when it has to deal with failure. It cannot enlist the actions and hearts of men unless it can guarantee a relatively quick and easy success. Therefore, when it meets crucial and tragic problems and repeated failures, it cannot offer men any hope or enlist their powers to fight against what seems to be the success of evil. And since most of our crucial problems in life are complex ones and ones which mankind has failed to solve since his origin, humanism offers us little help here. Only a naïve optimist would believe that eternal world peace and prosperity are a simple problem that can be easily solved in a few years.

Indeed, from the Christian viewpoint there is no guarantee whatsoever that perfect peace and prosperity are even possible on this earth. Humanism, then, must either entertain the quaint notion that man can solve his problems successfully and easily—or else retire and accept the bitter triumph of evil.

4

CONSTANT POWER

WHAT is needed, then, is an ethical system which is independent of success or failure. What is needed is a system which can produce strong ethical power and activity, regardless of whether a particular movement is succeeding or failing. What is needed is an ethic which will enable a man to fight for right and against evil and destruction, even though he and his fellow men continue to lose the battle. To put it dramatically, it may be that perfect and eternal peace is an impossibility on this earth, but nevertheless we need men and women who will fight and work for peace. This is the ultimate test of any ethic. Can it remain high and powerful and active in the face of apparently inevitable defeat? If it cannot, such an ethic is of no importance. If it can, it is what we need above all. Christianity believes that its ethic alone faces this problem and answers it. How? The basic motive in Christian ethics is love of God. The Christian is ethical not because he ought to be or because it is useful or because he is assured of success. He is ethical because he wants to be that way; he *is* that way. He who has experienced some degree of conversion, who has thereby attained some degree of objective love, is spontaneously active in ethics. It is his nature and expression of creative selfhood to take active part in the problems of life. Loving God he loves truth and right. Loving God he wants to take responsible ethical action. Thus, a Christian works and fights for the right, literally, for God's sake. Therefore, whether

a particular cause which the Christian supports succeeds or fails does not affect his active energy. He is not supporting it because it will bring him security and success. He is supporting it because it is God's will for him to do so, because he is interested in working for creative righteousness. It is his redeemed and converted nature to do so.

The terms success and failure are of relative unimportance to the Christian. We have already seen that Christianity teaches us that all particular measures and policies of men are something less than perfect and therefore are in need of constant change and improvement. Therefore, the Christian expects any movement partly to fail. He knows in advance that it will not succeed in the sense of solving all the problems. He knows that whatever evil and error are mixed in with the good *ought* to fail. But it is also true that many essentially good movements and policies fail. This does not surprise the Christian either for he knows the ethical significance of the Crucifixion. The Cross of Christ is a stern reminder to us that the Good is often crucified in life. Christ was at least "the best man that ever lived," He was good—but He was crucified and killed. This is a symbol of what happens elsewhere in life—many good people, good movements, good policies and plans are crucified. Because of the Cross, the Christian knows this, expects it, is not surprised when it occurs. Thus, when some relatively good measure fails, the Christian does not despair. The very fact that it did fail only provokes him to more redoubled efforts and action, *i.e.*, to seek new plans and new methods to work for what is right. This is the ethical significance of the resurrection. The good is often crucified, but it rises up again. The resurrection means that while the good is often defeated in history, it cannot be absolutely defeated. It will rise again continually and will win in the end. To the criticism that this is just an elaboration of the "success" motive, it must be said that this is only partly the case. To be sure, it seems that Christianity in asserting the final triumph or suc-

cess of good over evil is holding up the success theme. But we are all faced with this problem. How do we know that life isn't a bitter tragedy wherein evil succeeds—now and finally? How do we know that destruction and evil are not the dominant power and ethos in life? If they are, then life is utterly tragic and meaningless, and suicide would certainly be the logical conclusion because it would be a welcome release from the power of tragedy and suffering. If evil is the final answer to life, life is hell. Christianity asserts that though evil is powerful, it is not the dominant power in life. It is not the final answer. There is no historical evidence that the good will win in history—none apart from the Cross and the resurrection. But all people believe that the good will win—they *have* to believe it even without proof —because without that belief all effort and talk about creativity and peace and righteousness would be futile. Mankind believes that life is essentially good, that evil, terror and murder are not the dominant powers in life. Mankind *has* to believe this in order to live at all. But where is the proof? There is no proof. It is the blind and necessary faith of all mankind. But Christianity says that the Cross and the resurrection are proof that death is not final, that the good cannot be absolutely defeated. God's creative power is *the* power in life, "and the powers of death shall not prevail against it" (Mat. 16:18). So it is true that Christianity asserts that goodness and creativity are the abiding reality and structure of life, that they cannot be destroyed, that they will win, that they will "succeed." But this fact is the necessary condition for life itself, as well as for ethical activity. This is far different from asserting that a particular movement or policy will and must succeed, attracting people on that basis. Moreover, while Christianity asserts that the good will succeed, it does not guarantee that this and that particular expression of good will succeed in my lifetime or yours. It may well be defeated. Further, while Christianity says that in working for the good one attains self-fulfillment ("success"), it says paradoxically that, if one acts

from the motive of self-success, he will not achieve it. Self-fulfillment is a by-product. If you live and work for the good because you love it, self-fulfillment will occur as a result, but not a motive. Love is a condition of character, a powerful motive. Its expression results in happiness and "success," but love is destroyed if its motive is success. This is true in human love as well as in moral and religious love. If you love a woman in order to receive satisfaction, you do not really love the woman. You love only yourself and you will not receive satisfaction from such self-love. But if you love the woman objectively—for what she really is—satisfaction occurs as the by-product. So, in Christian ethics there is a success, but it is not an egoistic success. It is creative success which occurs as a product of love, of responsible and spontaneous participation in life.

Christian ethics, therefore, enables us to have high ethical vitality and vigor at all times in life. This is because the source of its power is not our egoistic hopes and fears of success and failure but God's creative love which is available to us at all times. We therefore work and struggle and live for creative righteousness because we want to, we are converted, made that way. It is our life—"In thy service are perfect joy and freedom." We know in advance that all particular movements and policies and programs are not final answers, therefore we look and work constantly for new measures and improvements. We know in advance that many particular good plans will be defeated. This serves to make us redouble our efforts to seek other ways of approaching the ideal. We continue to struggle because we know that human failures are not final nor human successes complete. Therefore, we do not blow hot and cold. It is the height of creative living to act responsibly and ethically in all areas of life. We therefore neither despair in "defeat" nor gloat in pride at "triumph." There is still work to be done, new levels to attain, more life to be lived.

Summary

SUMMARY

THIS book is by no means a complete presentation of Christian ethics. Many factors have been omitted, many have been referred to only briefly or indirectly. Further, many modern problems have not been considered and still others only briefly discussed. To include all the contributing factors in Christian ethics and to discuss in detail all the possible modern applications would entail an encyclopedia on ethics. Such is not our purpose. Our aim has been to present a brief picture of the essential Christian ethics and how it is related to modern problems and the essential importance of this ethic. In short, this is simply called an introduction to Christian ethics. The hope is that this will give us a beginning insight into what Christian ethics is, clear up many misunderstandings as to its principles, and provoke us to further study and practice. Let us summarize, then, the main points of this book.

Christian ethics is inseparable from the Christian religion. The basic religious doctrines are what determine the Christian ethical ideals. Their meaning and importance are derived from the total context of the Christian religion. Hence, the basis of our ethics is to be found in the Bible, in the historical tradition of theology and in the Church. This basis is the kind of love, justice, righteousness and mercy that God revealed in the person of Christ and in the Bible. The broad general principles, then, of Christian ethics are creative love and righteousness. It is the Christian faith that these constitute the abiding and eternal reality of life, that they are the objective structure of life which makes life worth while. This power and structure are what we mean by God. They

are impersonal in the sense that they are the creative form, order, structure and power in life and they are personal in the sense that they are available to individual persons and can be expressed through the individual personality. Thus, these principles are not just somebody's "ideas," they are incorporated into and constitute the very reality of life—the dynamic order of the universe. From the broad principles of love and righteousness and from the religious doctrines of man and God, other values and ideas are derived. Values such as freedom, democracy, rights of the individual and of society, etc., are logical deductions from the doctrines of Christianity. For example, because all men are of worth and dignity and equal before God and because all men are sinful, all men have certain rights of livelihood, free speech, free worship, etc. Since no man is perfect and righteous, no man or group of men is entitled to rule others absolutely. Since no man is perfect, all men have the right to have a say in their destiny. Since no man is sufficient unto himself, he has a responsibility towards his fellow men, his society. Because we are all children of the one God, we are related to one another and responsible for each other's livelihood. Thus, our many derived ideas, like the four freedoms, the Bill of Rights, democracy, social responsibility, stand upon Christian doctrines. If these doctrines are cast aside, as our modern secular thought attempts to do, the derived values cannot long survive. For if men are not equal and of essential dignity, if man is simply a victim of natural forces, he can have neither rights nor responsibilities. If there is no problem of sin, only a problem of ignorance, then the philosopher-scientists are entitled to rule all the rest of us, and we have no right to speak because we speak in ignorance. If democracy means only American democracy unfounded upon Christian bases, then it is only one of many forms which are neither good nor bad, but only "practical" to us and therefore not practical to some other country. Lastly, if values and ideals have no religious basis, no foundation in reality, but are only subjective opinions or social mores, then

there is no obligation or necessity of abiding by values at all. One opinion is as good as another and there is no objective standard to judge what is right or wrong, creative or destructive. This is anarchy and leads to the destruction of individual and social life. Where each man is his own god, all men become devils. Therefore, it is essential that we reaffirm not only the derived values, but particularly pay attention to their religious foundations and sources.

The human problem and the religious problem are to discover this reality and power and align ourselves with them. This problem is complicated by the fact of sin in human nature. Our freedom from nature, our anxiety and our sin provoke us into believing that we are self-sufficient laws unto ourselves, and that we can solve life's problems by our own abilities and efforts. This inordinate self-interest and pride tend to make us think we are God. But the difficulties of life tend to smash this pride. Then, because we are creatures composed of tensions and anxieties, we seek escapes from this anxiety. Our sin urges us to believe that we can escape and continually prevents us from facing our own inadequacy. This prevents us from "adjusting" ourselves to God. Therefore, our problem is to break the power of this sin. This can be done only in "losing our life"—in the loss of our self-love which occurs in self-surrender, humility, repentance. This is the fundamental core and purpose of religion—to save men from the destructive power of self-love and to enable men to exhibit and possess objective creative love. When this occurs a man is redeemed or saved or converted. He is converted to the creative power of the universe. This conversion results in self-fulfillment, the healthy creative personality, the "good character." This religious problem then is the primary condition for Christian ethics. This is because we saw that the problem of ethics is not so much the problem of ideals, but the problem of gaining power to achieve ideals. To be sure, the question of "which principles?" is important and Christianity asserts that love and righteousness

are *the* principles and are *the* reality in life. But, nevertheless, the most difficult and essential problem is to achieve and realize these ideals in the stuff of everyday life. Therefore, power to do this is the indispensable necessity. Since power is a religious problem we say that religion is the basis of ethics. Thus, Christian ethics through the Christian religion provides us with two important things. The ethics and the religious doctrines give us insight and wisdom into the meaning of life, give us truth by which we can interpret the meaning of events, analyze their significance, etc., and they give us the ideals or goals or principles towards which we must strive if we are to be creative and happy. The religious basis of our ethics then gives us the means of curbing and mastering our sin—with its prides and prejudices —whereby we can be more objective. It gives us, above all, the power to act upon our ideals with more pure motives, with constant and persistent vigor. It tends to bridge the gap between the ideal and our actual imperfect efforts. Because this power is the inherent dynamic of life itself, it is not vitiated by human success or failure. The motive, therefore, of the redeemed man is love itself, and therefore is vigorous, constant and independent of the fortunes of history.

Christian ethics is not a legalistic system of do's and don't's, a check list of petty vices and petty virtues. Such a system destroys man's freedom and ignores his basic motives, intentions, and state of character. Christian ethics offers us only the broad principles of love and righteousness. This defines and gives order to life. It provides a form and framework which makes freedom possible by defining its limits, thus avoiding anarchy. But it is the responsibility of the individual to apply and express those principles in all areas of his daily life. In this responsibility a man experiences his self-fulfillment—when his motive is love of God. The unity of Christianity is its basic principles and doctrines. The necessary "disunity" (freedom) is its differences in applying these principles to concrete issues of the day. Since we

are all imperfect, humility becomes us in our ethical decisions and actions. This humility prevents destructive and absolute disunity and makes for healthy variance. It is a unity without uniformity. Any other alternative we believe leads to self-righteous actions which breed destructive conflicts. This unity of basic values and variance of methods of achieving them require spiritual and mental maturity. For the responsibility of acting in all areas of life is difficult and severe. Precisely because we are free we are responsible for our action or inaction. Yet it is this paradox which brings the most dynamic happiness and greatest self-fulfillment to the fore. To escape from this freedom, as sin provokes us to do, is to die slowly either by frantic escapes or by submission to some man-made God like a tyrant, a state, a movement, etc. Christian ethics, then, defines the basic values and reality of life. The Christian religion enables us to approximate these values, to express creative power.

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